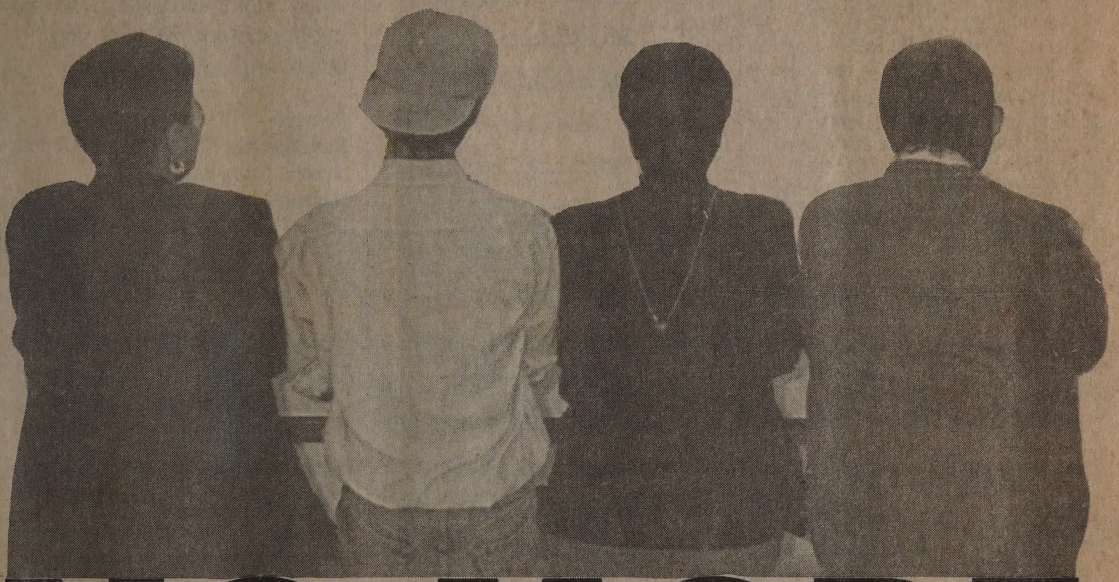
COLOR Life!

PREMIER ISSUE THE LESBIAN, GAY, TWOSPIRIT, & BISEXUAL, PEOPLE OF COLOR MAGAZINE JUNE 28, 1992



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Congratulations on the creation of COLORLife! It's an exciting new initiative and a much needed community resource. We should all join in supporting this magazine in order that it enjoy longevity. It is a gift to the richness of our cultural history as lesbians and gay men of color and adds to the making of herstory. We wish you much longevity and success.

Sincerely,
Katherine Acey
on behalf of Astraea, the National Lesbian Action Foundation

Dear COLORLIFE:
CONGRATULATIONS! What a coup. A wonderful idea whose time has certainly arrived. A Magazine for Gay and Lesbian People of Color by Gay and Lesbian People of Color. You all are brilliant and wonderful and courageous and I can't wait to see the fruit of your collective love and creative labors. Oh and what a name - COLORLIFE - it's so evocative. It conjures a lifetime of sweet memory, color, poetry, jazz - Birdland, James Baldwin and Audrey Lorde. How rich the promise in such a name. I wish you all good things. You've made my week.

Yours,
Sandra J. Lowe, Esq. Director The Governor's Office of Lesbian and Gay Concerns for the State of New York

Editorial

For several years, many of us in the lesbian and gay People of Color community have talked about what is missing from the lesbian and gay press. We have noted the lack of respect for people of color and the inadequate attention to our news and issues. We have not been represented in positions of power and consequence in these institutions. We have done more than just talk: we have written for the lesbian and gay press, we have held paid jobs on their staff, and we have acted as consultants as well as bridges to our communities. In countless meetings, white editors, publishers, and public relations officers have told us, often in a patronizing way, that they intend to make their publications more inclusive. We have yet to see results and we still don't feel that those publications in any way belong to us.

The two dozen women and men of color who have worked to put out COLORLife know the critical importance of making connections between our community's past, what we do in the here and now, and what the future may bring. The opportunity to see connections and forge alliances where possible will be found in the pages of COLORLife.

Our lives are affected not only by homophobia but also racism, sexism, and classism. Therefore, we actively seek to eradicate all forms of oppression. The American Dream is a lie. There has never been a "melting pot." We have yet to see multiracial, multicultural democracy in this country. However, during the last twenty-five years, we have seen violent and nonviolent manifestations of the struggle for democracy. COLORLife will continue the centuries-old tradition, much of it handed down orally from generation to generation, of documenting the ongoing fight for freedom, justice, and dignity for People of Color— especially lesbians, gay men, Two Spirits, transsexuals, and bisexuals of color. COLORLife reaffirms our allegiance first to our ancestors, our tribes, and our cultures. We uphold values that are life-affirming, stressing cooperation over competition, respect and responsibility to ourselves, to one another, our families, our communities and the earth before we pledge allegiance to any flag or government.

Many of us will never pledge allegiance to the United States flag because of the atrocities and genocide perpetrated against many People of Color by the U.S. government, because of the stolen land and destruction of the earth over the last five centuries that continues to this day. We have created COLORLife as an expression of invincible life in the face of life-threatening repression and in commitment to unity and solidarity. We dedicate COLORLife in recognition of 500 years of the survival and resistance of the first nations and to the continued, principled struggle of People of Color in a deeply racist society.

COLORLife's success will never look like mainstream success: Success for us means investing in ourselves, our people, our communities. It means sharing the fruits of that success with one another, sharing resources so we may survive, creating our own innovations, and working for social change. We have within our communities—and a community is, after all, a group of autonomous individuals working together for common goals—a potent combination of talents and skills, an incredible network of contacts on the local, national, and international level, and capital assets that can be readily tapped. Clearly, our success will depend upon harnessing this potential power; on good, solid management; on our ability to deliver a low-cost, high-quality product; adherence to honest business practices and editorial integrity. We will also strive to provide excellent service to all our investors, employees, volunteers, subscribers, readers, advertisers, distributors, and our suppliers—all equally important. Of course, as in any real democracy, we will not be able to achieve this success without your vigilance, participation, and cooperation. We hold ourselves accountable to you—our community—not to the bottom line or any elite body of individuals.

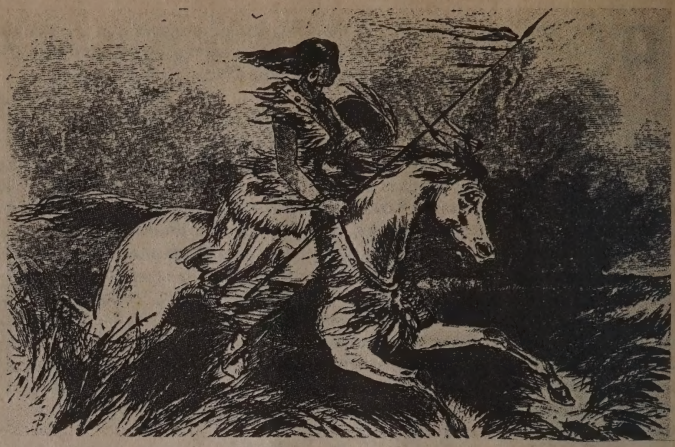
We live in times of great urgency. We want to have a magazine where we can hear our own community's perspective on such crucial issues and events such as the recent revolt in South Central Los Angeles. Like the residents of South Central L.A., we don't want to be pacified. And news coverage that fails to reflect our perspective is not acceptable. COLORLife will be the much needed voice in New York City's lesbian and gay press, and, as a community resource, committed to fight all forms of social injustice.

We hope COLORLife will remain long in your lives because you believe in it. So far, we have received a broad-based ground swell of positive support and constructive criticism. All that's missing is your input. In the fall of this year, we hope to start regular monthly production of COLORLife. The complimentary copy you're holding in your hands is a labor of our love. We worked and cooperated in an atmosphere of rare openness, trust and mutual respect to reach out, listen, and connect with you in the effort to create a more powerful community.

In the April 1992 issue of Body Positive, recently resigned editor Michael Slocum, a gay Black man who is HIV positive, wrote eloquently regarding building community. His words address COLORLife's mission as well: "These times warrant great change. And courage. And strength. We have to set our minds to the new solutions. We have to gather together and build something new, a coalition that includes all our voices, that empowers us to build an agenda from our loving hearts. We sell ourselves very short when we live simply in response to what is put before us. None of us has to accept anything less than what we in our hearts desire. I desire this: That our experience with AIDS changes the world. That AIDS bursts open our absurd health care system and finally allows for universal care for everyone. That AIDS, the great equalizer, stabs away at racism, sexism, classism and homophobia until these injustices against our humanity are gone. That we will wake up and see that the world is not fine the way it is. That change is inevitable and necessary. NO MORE BUSINESS AS USUAL."

Welcome to COLORLife!

Role Model



We Wah (1849-1896), a Zuni, is still recalled in stories today as "that man of enormous strength who lived a woman's daily life in woman's dress, and remained a power in his Pueblo's gravest councils." His life as a "lhamana," an individual who bridges the role of women and men, has been documented primarily by anthropologist Matilda Coxe Stevenson. We Wah spent six months in Washington, D.C. as Stevenson's guest, calling on President Grover Cleveland and Speaker Of The House John Carlisle, and circulating throughout Washington society as a Zuni "priestess."

Bar Chee Ampe, a Crow, who also lived in the 19th Century, is recalled in tradition as "one of the bravest women who ever lived . . . possessing great intellectual powers, she was endowed with extraordinary muscular strength, with the activity of a cat and the speed of an antelope." The tradition holds that Bar Chee Ampe was a Woman Chief whose life is documented in the letters of frontiersman Edwin Denig. Woman Chief, as described by Denig, was an accomplished warrior and leader who eventually married four wives. Reflecting on We Wah and Bar Chee Ampe, Denig wrote, "Strange country this, where males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex!"

"What Are Two Spirits?"

The term "Two Spirit" is used by Native America to describe the lesbian and gay lifestyle. We use this term because it is culturally relevant to us.

As Two Spirits we are members of our Tribes, families and communities. We prefer to use this term because the titles "lesbian" and "gay" mean belonging to a white segment of white culture. Though we have gratitude to the white lesbian and gay communities who have done work to secure a safe space in mainstream culture for homosexual lifestyles and issues, we find it most important for us to identify and remain a part of our specific communities.

Therefore, as Two Spirits we are Native first. Our group We Wah and Bar Chee Ampe uses the term Two Spirits, along with many of the other Native Two Spirit groups in North America — e.g., Tahoma Two Spirits/Seattle, Two Spirited Peoples of the First Nations/Toronto, etc.

The heterosexual woman is considered One Spirit, as is the heterosexual man. A Two Spirit is a woman or man who is a combination of both of these spirits. We are considered the third gender in our nations — neither male or female, we are considered as both, regardless of genitalia. In the histories of many of our Tribes, Two Spirits have often played a major role in mediation of two warring factions. We have also been known to possess special abilities of insight, and for making things beautiful.

In today's world we suffer from the same homophobia as everyone else, though our cultural validity allows us to assume our place among our people — the First Nations of Turtle Island.

Pidamiya . . . We Wah and BarChee Ampe:

RODNEY KING. Any Questions?

BY ANGELA JORDAN

You know who he is. Just the mention of his name brings the stark, ugly recollection of police whacking at his body. The first time seeing that videotape was gut-wrenching in its reality. I could almost feel the blows he received, and turned away from the sight. But I was drawn back to the screen only to realize it wasn't yet over. You know how many blows in how many seconds now. We've seen that tape repeatedly.

It was universally horrifying. Too honest. Too impartial. Too indisputable. Too wrong. No one could deny what they had seen; it was nauseating. Every African-American male must have seen himself in King's place. As People of Color, lesbians and gaymen in neighborhoods across the country, we could see our cops'uniforms, our patrol cars' headlights, our brothers writhing on the ground. For us, the scene was too familiar. So while the anger resurfaced with each replay of King's beating, there was with it the sense that we would finally see justice done. It didn't matter what color you are, we all saw the same thing and were sickened by it. No more could they say it was a Black man's word against the cops'. This was one picture telling thousands of words .But we relaxed and slept through this one, only to awaken to a nightmare. Four white police officers were tried by a jury of their peers (10 whites, one Asian, one Latino). The four were found not guilty of excessive force. It has happened many times before. Police have terrorized and brutalized our communities with impunity .But this was supposed to be different. This was police brutality on videotape. All the evidence of what took place was there for all to see. So how could a jury acquit these officers? What did they see that the rest of us did not? The defense asked the jurors to see through the eyes of the police and when they did, they saw their fear. They saw what the police did: three-fifths of a man. Not enough of a human being to hold the police accountable for beating him. Los Angeles burned. Yes. But Simi Valley should have burned instead. Those jurors' neighborhoods should have gone up in smoke. Those four cops - Briseno, Koon, Wind, and Powell - should have been pulled from their patrol cars and beaten unmercifully.. I would have cheered if that had happened.

Instead, I am left with the bitter awareness that racism cannot be legislated away. No profusion of laws or constitutionalamendments will change the inherent bias against People of Color which has existed since the birth of this nation. Indeed, ifColumbus should be credited with anything, it is that he imported disease, racism and exploitation to a land of nations which couldhave lived and thrived without such things. Europeans who fled oppression in their homelands arrived in the Americas only tosubjugate Native people, steal their land and commit genocide against them. The laws they made were to govern and protect themselves; non-Europeans were consistently betrayed by those laws.

Today, the KKK lives in the police departments of this country, and the law is on their side. They swing their batons in South Central L.A. and go home to their bedrooms in Simi Valley. Their neighbors serve on juries for cases of police brutality because a predominantly white jury is thought to be more capable of impartiality than a jury out of the precincts in which policework . But a jury is no place for racists or cowards. Racists cannot be impartial when a Person of Color has a case against whites, especially white cops. And cowards do not take risks if it means their voice would be the lone one to speak out in the name of justice. Clearly, justice is not blind.

The whole world witnessed what happened when we divested ourselves of that myth. The beating of Rodney King has shown us apartheid in the U.S. No white person should ever unquestioningly watch images of youths with their heads down being led away in handcuffs on the six o'clock news. We all should wonder on some level of consciousness whether those youths may just be innocent and whether the cops may just be guilty of something themselves.

Some thirteen thousand Los Angeles residents were arrested following the verdict, on charges ranging from disorderly conductand curfew violation to arson and attempted murder. They weremostly, but not exclusively, People of Color; not all Black as the media seem fixed on portraying them. There were Latinos inlarge numbers who live in the neighborhoods around Koreatown, and who were heavily involved in the "redistribution" of wealth there. Hundreds of them were undocumented immigrants who now face further persecution by the Immigration and NaturalizationService (INS), and possible deportation. Many thousands are likely to pay some penalty for their righteous indignation. Thefour LAPD cops have not paid for their inhumanity. Was anyone listening to this nation's leaders? Did anyone care? The powers-that-be are in trouble. Vast numbers of people, whites included, are dissatisfied with the status quo. The system doesn't work and we're not sitting still for it anymore. In Los Angeles, Tom Bradley's reign as mayor is in jeopardy. Here in New York, David Dinkins' mayoralty has been in question for some time. He weathered the racial tension in Crown Heights, and it's anyone's guess as to why New York did not boil over as a result of the Rodney King verdict, given this city's history of unpunished police brutality and murder. But if he should refuse to support the demand for an all-civilian, Citizens' Complaint Review Board and instead continue to back Police Commissioner Lee Brown's opposition to the proposal, Dinkins could find himself looking for other employment. So in the aftermath of the verdict and the wrath expressed against it, with politicians feeling vulnerable, every vote counts. No constituency can be ignored any longer. The demographics of this country are changing as dramatically as international borders and technology. This time, we must seize the opportunity to have our voices heard. People of Color will be nearly half the work force within 10 years. Currently, one percent of the population controls 90 percent of the wealth. What will our share be in the 21st century? How will we get it? Next time we are stopped for speeding, will we just get a ticket? ❑

WHAT RIOTS?

BY JACK WATERS

I had hoped that the mayhem following the riots would be a stimulusfor coalition building, that more people would see how racial issues are linked to AIDS, Queer rights, and feminist concerns; howpolice brutality and a corrupt, insensitive, biased criminaljustice system affects us all in common. No such luck. That therewas not a single mention made in the first issue of QW followingthe King verdicts was disappointing. There could

continued on next page

have at least beena by-line. A last minute word. Something. The lack of coverage inthis New York weekly claiming to address the concerns and interestsof the lesbian and gay community substantiates the numbing apathy infecting many queers across the country. The editorial omission of this major news event reveals shallow priorities.

I was at a roof party on the Lower East Side the Friday night following the day of demonstrations and eruptions of violence inNew York. The mood was strange. Outside everything was veryquiet, a calm before the storm that never happened. Anticipating imminent mayhem, we were predicting Big Violence in the city for Saturday. Inside it dawned on me that I was the only Blackperson in a room full of GWMs. I felt awkward and out of place as they discussed race. I couldn't speak, I could only listen as I shook off the feeling of being in an enemy camp. Someone asked, has the country ever felt like this before? I said sure, Miami, 1987; Detroit, Watts, the Long Hot Summer of 1968 Riots across the country; Burn, Baby, Burn. Remember? Silence. Then, "I wasn't even fetal mass then." "I was about three years old." Oops. I'd dated myself. No sense of history at all, these kids. They think ACT-UP invented civil disobedience and that Take BackThe Night is an original concept of Queer Nation's.

An ACT-UPer entered the room, dazed. He'd joined the march fromthe rally at 42nd Street and described the event with an unsettling detachment. "It was nothing like an ACT-UP demo," hesaid. I would imagine not, I thought, as I contrasted images ofanger resulting from the continuous crushing humiliation that isnormal Black existence with the indignant rage that comes fromthe government not providing what white people are taught toexpect as their right. His eyes were glazed, and he was vaguely coherent, as if he had been through some mind-altering experience. He said it was amazing to him to see because "racism is what it's all about—isn't it?" And there he was, he said, witnessing racism in action. He continued to report that, as the crowd marched downtown, people threw rocks and bottles, breaking windows and wreaking general havoc. He was surprised at how worked up people were since he himself "could not be moved to such action over this particular issue." (Someone mentioned later that, as an ardent participant in ACT-UP, this guy has done some unbelievable civil disobedience.) He described how a disturbance would erupt and, no matter who had caused it, the cops would immediately grab the closest young Black male. Hewitnessed the cops beating young Black men in a systematic androutine way that was familiar to him, having experienced similarbeatings himself at ACT-UP demonstrations. The extent of his distance from what had just taken part in became evident when he described how peculiar it was for him to watch these beatings. That remoteness, his absence of kinship for the people being beaten kept me silent. My sense was that he did not feelendangered: The only threat to him was from the police, from whom he could conceal his activism. He was protected by his skin color.

Within all of us there is a reticence to consider that the very essence of this culture's value system is hideously unworkable and wrong.

Gay white males often lack a sense of affinity with other groupsbecause, like any other ruling class, their condition of privilege in this society is assumed. It can be difficult for them to align themselves with women and other "oppressed minorities" because they don't have to do so. At least that ishow they perceive their concerns—separate and different. Thereis still an underlying assumption that AIDS is an issue that primarily concerns gay white men. I suspect that this misconception is still held by a majority of ACT-UP members, as well as too many people within Black, Latino, and other marginalized communities. Like racism and sexism, that kind of isolationist min dset illustrates the divisive tactics that the ruling class uses to keep real power in the hands of the privileged few. Many who recognize the inequities of the medical and legal systems in health care are still not ready to accept that there is something intrinsically and profoundly wrong with the entire system. They assume a position in the pecking order and don't want to jeopardize their place. "All we need is to get this AIDS thing straightened out," they seem to think. "Then I can go after the Armani suit, the yacht, the million dollars, and the presidency that I'm entitled to get according to the American Dream."

This is not just a problem for gay white men. Within all of us there is a reticence to consider that the very essence of this culture's value system is hideously unworkable and wrong. We fear facing the fact that global culture is in need of a total and complete revision—a transformation almost impossible to conceive. So, we continue by the old rules without challengingthem.

When you buy into a corrupt system, you run the risk of becoming a part of that system, like Clarence Thomas and Sandra Day O'Connor—both of whom are instrumental in keeping their own out of power. Thomas is a Black man in a country thatloathes Blacks; O'Connor is a woman in a misogynist state. Stripped of their robes and placed in Anywhere, U.S.A., theywould be subjected to the same contempt reserved for Blacks andwomen by the power structure they themselves now help to maintain. By the same token, an AIDS activist who doesn't recognize his oneness with lesbians, women, People of Color—all people in struggle for liberation—is no activist at all. LikeThomas and O'Connor, he is a victim of his own self-loathing deceit.

It's said that freedom can't be given but must be won. History shows that very often, after a violent overthrow, the new regime takes on characteristics of the former oppressor. A transfer of power happens without addressing or correcting the flaw of elitist mentality inherent in the social structure. Witness theFrench and American revolutions, or Cuba, where the Castro regime continues to suppress gays, lesbians, women, sex workers, and theHIV positive. Granted, violent struggle is often the only option left in many cases. However, by conforming to a process where the strongest rules, you risk adopting the mores of the same process of oppression that kept you down.

Why pick on GWMs? Because, in light of gay awareness and AIDS activism, they should know better. Because those who benefit from privilege and power by virtue of their race and gender are in a better position to make changes. It is their responsibilityto be active in the redistribution of the wealth and privilege that power represents. Alleviating the need for violence, this gesture would help to end the perpetual cycle of aggression, and contribute to a truly revolutionary consciousness. ❑

Enoch is Enough!

BY LUVENIA PINSON

In the annals of American history, bigotry has always played a prominent role. Even members of oppressed groups often buy into it, and pass on insults and discrimination they themselves have experienced. So a Black member of the New York City Council can verbalize his dislike for a large segment of a population he apparently knows nothing about, i.e., lesbians, gay men, and people with AIDS, and can do this while simultaneously manipulating circumstances calculated to give him ultimate control over various AIDS funding sources.

Lesbians and gay men who live in Williams' District, and others fighting for their lives against AIDS, have been singled out and subjected to his particular brand of homophobia. The lesbian and gay community is still in the process of responding to his verbiage, including an analysis of his voting record with the proper relevance. An enlightened constituency will always function in its own best interest— as we come to realize that bad politicians are sent to City Hall and other seats of government by good people who don't bother to vote. We cannot accept an implied morality without evidence of the individual having any moral fiber at all.

In communities of color, where over 90% of newsworthy information never reaches us, we should commit ourselves to the dissemination of information so we can make enlightened choices. This would help to stop the election of such politicians as Williams. ❑

Following are excerpts from a statement prepared by various lesbian and gay People of Color, addressing Enoch Williams' recent remarks, calling for his resignation or removal as Chair of The New York City Council Health Committee, opposing his appointment to the City's HIV Planning Council as well as the creation of a New City Council AIDS Advisory Commission :

Many New Yorkers had hoped that, with a revamping of the City Council under the new City Charter, we might achieve a more equitable and representative form of government, where the priorities and needs of New Yorkers would take precedence over the politics and patronage of city officials. It was anticipated that City Council committee chairpersons would demonstrate a history of interest and expertise in their areas of assigned responsibility. However, the appointment of Enoch Williams as Chair of the Council Health Committee, and his reported remarks in the press on April 20, 1992, call this expectation into question.

While Council member Williams has never demonstrated a thorough understanding of health care, in his recently appointed capacity as Chair of the Health Committee he has demonstrated an appalling lack of knowledge, foresight, vision or commitment to the spectrum of New York City's health needs. At a time when health care services in New York City are in a state of constant decline and in danger of collapse, Williams has clearly demonstrated that he does not have the expertise or leadership to respond effectively to the health care crises facing this city. [He] has acknowledged on the floor of the Council his lack of expertise on AIDS — possibly the most pressing health concern affecting New Yorkers over the past decade.

And, in the most recent example of his poor leadership and insensitivity, Council member Williams, instead of finding ways to generate more funding for health care, has attempted to scapegoat a particular group which includes People of Color — namely, lesbians and gay men — for the lack of adequate AIDS services in Black and Latino communities.

Although Council member Williams has "disavowed" biased statements against lesbians and gay men, holding us responsible for the spread of AIDS, which were attributed to him in the press, he is yet to categorically deny making such comments or to issue a statement specifically condemning homophobia. Further, his office has refused requests from Black and other People of Color lesbian and gay organizations to discuss the recently reported statements. . . .

This lack of leadership in the face of the devastation of AIDS in our entire communities exposes the hollow rhetoric of his stated concern for women and children with AIDS. Williams cannot formulate effective policy . . . while he consistently displays a lack of understanding of the interconnectedness of all the health-related problems facing New York City.

The issues surrounding Williams' leadership of the Health Committee clearly extend beyond questions of personal incompetence, reflecting also the inept and hostile leadership of City Council Speaker Peter Vallone. . . . Vallone's appointment of Enoch Williams as Chair of the Health Committee suggests that his interests in rewarding the politically faithful take precedence over finding leadership with regard to the City's health crisis. While Vallone will be unable to rectify his history of neglect and animosity, in particular toward lesbians and gay men and communities of color, he must take responsibility for this most recent blunder.

If Williams does not display the insight to recognize his shortcoming as Committee chair and resign, then Vallone must remove him from his responsibility. . . . Further, every member of the City Council, including Council member Tom Duane, must take responsibility and explain their part in re-electing Mr. Vallone, who has never demonstrated a sense of inclusive leadership. . . .

Mr. Williams' conduct is not the only example of homophobia or bigotry on the part of elected members of the City Council, or of insensitivity and lack of leadership by Black and Latino members of the Council in response to the concerns of their lesbian and gay constituents. . . . As lesbian and gay People of Color, we will not allow Mr. Williams, or any other individual, to make us invisible by stripping us of our racial, ethnic, and cultural identities and heritages.

It is time that we take a new direction in dealing with AIDS and other health care issues in this city — one in which we are all committed to finding the resources necessary to save lives in a city in crisis. . . . We reject Council member Antonio Pagan's call for the creation of an Advisory Commission on AIDS. Currently, there exist a number of entities such as the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council, charged with the responsibility of charting the city's strategic response to the AIDS epidemic. Creation of yet another such institution would be both redundant and a diversion of resources which should be channeled instead into creating services in communities immediately in need.

Lastly, we ask that the Mayor refrain from appointing Mr. Williams to the HIV Health and Human Services Planning Council. . . . It is imperative that the Mayor provide leadership around this crisis, publicly demonstrating that neither homophobia nor incompetence will be tolerated in the future of New York City.

Instead of demonstrating a good faith effort to resolve the issues of the past few weeks, Enoch Williams has attempted to manipulate the series of events and public perceptions of the issue by utilizing divisive racial politics. . . His stated commitment to the equitable distribution of AIDS funding has demonstrated no concern or understanding for the needs of lesbians and gay men of color, or for People of Color who are not Black or Latino, including Arabs, Asians, Pacific Islanders and Native Americans. By attempting to drive a wedge between the interests of People of Color and those of lesbians and gays, he makes invisible lesbians and gay men of color who reside throughout the City of New York and in his own district, and particularly the thousands of us with AIDS and HIV infection. ❑

NEA continued from page 28

censorship through public funding. An apparent minority in her opinion, she considered the journal to be a superficial treatment of the subject matter. The criticism raises questions as to whether the journal's intent was merely to shock readers, or if there was an earnest desire to delve deeper into the stereotypes of male/female role reinforcement. Kalin himself acknowledged the technical shortcomings of what he said was a first endeavor.

Others seemed uncomfortable wit the photographs and articles in the issue for different reasons. Board member Nina Martin stated that MR's main error was failing to print a disclaimer distancing the organization from opinions expressed in the journal. Audience member and choreographer Simome Forte, critiquing the content, made comparative references to "people's pathetic sex lives" and "writings on bathroom walls." A dancer questioned the relevance of gender identification to the field of dance, performance art, and movement research in general. Filmmaker Carl George answered that dancers, whose art form is all but totally defined by the body, should consequently be interested in gender, so closely concerned with physicality. Another dancer felt that, after watching Torr's interpretation of male identity through stance gesture and gaze, the subject of gender identity's effect on and relationship to movement and posture was unquestionable.

Holly Hughes seemed somewhat taken by surprise at activist/writer/artist Esther Kaplan's suggestion that NEA censorship might be a more relevant issue for those artists and organizations privileged enough to actually receive public funding. Many artists, particularly People of Color, with less visibility and resources than the famous "defunded three" will never receive NEA funding. This is not the result of any recent trend in censorious policy: The NEA has always represented the interests of a select group within the cultural elite. Kaplan's comment, made with ironic intent, was that she "hoped MR could survive without the $1,400." The meeting took up the issue of subtler but far more effective censorship—censorship of those so marginalized by the grant process because of their socio-economic position that they don't even apply for grants. As in other areas of the arts community, the dance/performance art sector has not critiqued the inherent racism in the granting process. The issue of sexuality has all but eclipsed other areas of politics within this debate.

The debate over control of peoples' minds and bodies continues as biological determinants such as genetics, genitalia, and outward appearance are questioned as decisive, indelible factors in individual determination of gender. Delineation and classification of racial and sexual identities are still primary methods of population control. In this white male dominated society, the body of the Other—where you are either female or feminized, reduced and conquered—is most frequently marked as targets by such external determinants as hair, makeup, and clothing.

Though such racial demarcation as skin color could be argued as an equally indelible external indicator as gender, this could be discredited by the fact that there is no real legal delineation of the point where a person becomes a member of any particular race. By the same token, there is no real legal determining point for male or femaleness either. Nor, unfortunately, is there much consideration of the possibility for more than two generic categories.

Miscegenation (which involves dynamics of both race and sex) is still taboo by many standards, it is socially acceptable because it does not question male authority. Its potency as controversy is diffused through exposure (though not really examined) in heterosexual mainstream culture through films such as Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever."

Imagine a point in the future where one's genitalia and other biological makeup (pun intended) would be as changeable as one's wig! We begin to see how the threat to the male power structure goes beyond morality or decorum: If gender is not fixed (pun intended), how can any one aspect of it be superior to another? We begin to understand the actions of the NEA as a wing of government. We see gender politics, this issue of tissue, as a struggle of power and control rather than aesthetics or principle. ❑

Contribute to the writing of our history:

I am a Puerto Rican lesbian interviewing Puerto Rican lesbians or bisexuals over 55, for a book about two generations of Puerto Rican women born between 1915 and 1960. All interviews are anonymous. No names or other identifying information will be used. If you'd like to be interviewed, please contact Elizabeth Crespo at 88 Van Ruypen St., #4A, Jersey City, NJ 07306, (201) 659-5735.

METRO

History Was Made With The First East Coast Lesbian & Gay Labor Conference

By Chezia Carraway

History Was Made With First Dast Coast Lesbian and Gay Labor Conference
By Chezia Carraway
The first ever Lesbian & Gay Labor Conference was held at the headquarters of District Council 37, American Federation of State, County & Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO, on June 6, 1992. Two Hundred enthusiastic participants, many of whom were People of Color, witnessed this historic event which was organized by the Lesbian & Gay Labor Coalition, which is comprised of several union locals that are members of LAGIC - Lesbian and Gay Issues Committee. The opening pleanary session was highlighted by a warm and sincere greeting from DC 37's Executive Director, Stanley Hill, and a motivating keynote presented by Sandy Lowe, Director of the NYS Governor's Office of Lesbian & Gay Concerns.

The conference workshops covered several important interesting topics including union support for Lesbian & Gay Political Action, Negotiation Domestic Partner Benefits, Dealing with Homophobia - Especially on the Job, What Union Can Do To STOP THE VIOLENCE.
The day long activities closed with a heart warming presentation by LAGIC CO-CHAIR Regina Shavers.

According to Julie Schwartzberg, LAGIC co-chair, a West Coast Lesbian and Gay Labor Conference is in the planning as well as a 1993 National Conference. ❑

LA RED The Lesbian Feminist Latin American and Caribbean Network

BY MARIANA ROMO-CARMONA

I want to start by explaining the meaning of the word "red" in Spanish— no it's not a color, it means "net." A net, such as we would use to go fishing, or to snare a butterfly. In our technological times, the work network has become so linked (pardon me) to computerized reality that it fails to carry the visual image of an international community connected in the many pointed fashion of a net. So, I want to use the word RED.

In 1986, in Geneva, a number of Latin American lesbians attended the 8th ILIS Conference. ILIS stands for International Lesbian Information Service, and it is a mostly European organization of lesbians who originally broke away from the old IGA, the International Gay Association. Since that time of course, and probably not in small measure due to the consciousness raised by ILIS, IGA has become ILGA, and many lesbians all over the world have joined it. Back in 1986, however, it was the ILIS conference that served as a meeting point for many lesbians from the Southern countries*, who attended this international event for the first time. Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians went on to organize on an international level, having recently celebrated their second international conference in Tokyo. For our part Latin American and Caribbean lesbians identified a RED of contact among us that proved historically significant as well.

Since 1981, Feminist Conferences, with the title of ENCUENTROS, had been celebrated every two years in Colombia, Peru, Brasil, with the fourth such Encuentro being planned for 1987 in Mexico. During the Encuentro in Lima, Peru in 1983, a workshop entitled "Patriarchy and Lesbianism" was planned spontaneously. Out of 600 women attending the conference, nearly half attended this workshop! Lesbian contacts among women in the Third World were strengthened in 1985 in Nairobi, Kenya during the non-governmental forum held for the first Decade of Women conference. That year also, at the Third Latin American & Caribbean Feminist Encuentro in Brasil, lesbians met independently but found that conference organizers had included lesbianism only under the topic of sexuality. The gains made in Peru had given way to a homophobic retreat into anonymity. By 1986, then, at the ILIS conference, it was clear that a solely lesbian conference for Latin American and Caribbean women was imperative.

The first Lesbian Feminist Encuentro was organized by Mexican lesbians to coincide with the Fourth Feminist Encuentro to be held in Taxco, Mexico in 1987. Our Encuentro, the lesbian one, was held at a secret location in Cuernavaca, about 2 hours away from Mexico City. Fearing government and public repression, the organizers maintained strict secrecy until the very day the buses left the city, loaded with lesbians mostly from Latin America and the Caribbean, but also Latinas from the U.S. and parts of Europe, as well as a few invited non-Latina guests. Salient features of this Encuentro were, paradoxically, the strengthening of international ties among us, as well as revealing serious conflict between lesbians in Latin America and Chicanas and Latinas living in the U.S. or Europe.

The second Lesbian Feminist Encuentro was meant to happen in Peru, but given the critical economic and political situation there, lesbians in Costa Rica took on the task of hosting it in 1990. This meeting was not as well attended as the first, and focussed more on a grass-roots level of organizing. Again the location was kept secret, to be held in the vicinity of San Jose. Costa Rica's size, and an announcement placed in an international feminist Latin American magazine (FemPress), were probably two factors that contributed to the Press in that country finding out about the Encuentro, and the ensuing harassment that organizers and attendees endured. The Press led the Church and the government in a proverbial witch hunt, condemning the gathering as immoral and illegal. Lesbians responded in outrage chastising the

continued on page 11

*Women from the Third World prefer to use the term Southern countries.

INTERNATIONAL BRIEFS

BY V. CORZEN

GAY MEN ARRESTED IN THE BAHAMAS FOR HAVING GAY SEX— CASE DROPPED!

In response to international pressure the Bahamian Government dropped its case against two gay men, Malcolm Chaplan, a British Citizen, and Roger Nelson of Trinidad, arrested for allegedly having sex on the beach. The pressure came in the form of numerous letters and faxes sent to the Prime Minister, Lynden Pindling, and Attorney General Sean McWeeney. The campaign was led jointly by The International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) and The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA).

On May 4, 1992 Chaplan and Nelson were arrested and held in a cold wet jail cell for ten days before being moved to other facilities. Chaplan, was moved to Fox Hill prison—notorious for its bad conditions. Nelson was moved to an undisclosed location.

Chaplan and Nelson were arrested under the new Sexual Offenses and Domestic Violence Act, Article 16, the "unnatural crimes section." The statue outlaws sexual intercourse performed by same sex couples in a public place. The penalty is up to 20 years in prison. The law defines intercourse as any degree of penetration by any part of the body or object. There is not a comparable law for heterosexual sex on the beach.

Although the new sexual offenses act applies only to homosexuals, thus making it explicitly homophobic, Amnesty International would not take up the case. They claimed it did not fall within its mandate, which is to work on gay-specific cases only if they relate to private acts— Nelson and Chaplan's arrest was for public sex.

In a telephone interview from the prison, Chaplan denied having sex on the beach. A former employee of Carnival Cruise lines, he was not rehired after being released. Spokespeople for IGLHRC and ILGA encourage people to write Carnival Cruise lines and protest this homophobic decision. Their address is 100 SE Second Street, Miami, FL, or you can call them at (800) 325-1214.

HIV-POSITIVE PROSTITUTES MURDERED BY BURMESE GOVERNMENT

Approximately 25 HIV positive prostitutes were administered Cyanide injections in Burma/Myanmar, after being deported from Thailand. The Burmese government gave the women, ages 18 to 35, the injections to stop the spread of the HIV virus. Since this incident the Thai police have stopped the deportation of Burmese prostitutes. Crime Suppression Division Deputy Commander Bancha Jaragareet said he learned of their deaths when they did not show up in their villages. Jaragareet claimed he did not know who gave the women the injections, nor if they had died. However there was a report in The Nation that the women were buried.

This was not the first incident involving the murder of prostitutes in Burma/Myanmar. Dissident groups recently reported that young Burmese women are forced into prostitution, murdered, and their bodies found at sea after being deported from Thailand. Nitya Thippayanuruksakul, the Director of Emergency Home, a Bangkok shelter for abused women, reported that Thai police told her of a group of 20 Burmese women deported and murdered by the Burmese military.

The Burmese government reports that more than 74,000 people have tested positive for the HIV virus in their country. In some towns this accounts for as much as 90 percent of the population.

Prostitutes are not the only group under attack by the Burmese military. A letter secretly smuggled out of Burma/Myanmar to Thailand reports of Muslims being murdered and women being raped by Burmese troops. The author of the letter was quoted, "We Muslims are like birds in trap. We are treated as animals by the soldiers." He continued to report on the systematic stripping of land rites which he claimed were then handed over to the Buddhists.

Children in Burma/Myanmar are also victims of the 30 year-old-civil war. A recent report on the region states that children under five years make up 15% of the total population and account for almost half of the total number of deaths taking place in the country each year. Of the roughly 400,000 deaths occurring annually, approximately 175,000 are young children.

This fact is attributed to the numerous health problems that face the country. Malaria, tuberculosis, hepatitis, leprosy, dengue and HIV are escalating at alarming rates. No AIDS cases have been officially reported; however a number of HIV-infected patients have died of tuberculosis. HIV screening has been carried out since 1985, with the first official case of HIV infection in 1988.

This and other intolerable conditions have caused a mass exodus from the country. Approximately 700,000 Burmese refugees have fled the country since the military coup in 1962. This is about two percent of the total population. Of that number 400,000 left after the suppression of "democracy" in 1988. Many of the refugees have left Burma/Myanmar for Thailand and other neighboring countries.

The ruling SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council) lost the 1990 elections. Afterwards they arrested thousands of members of the opposition party including the leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), Aung San Suu Kyi, who is in her third year of house arrest in Rangoon and has not been seen by the outside world since December of 1989. Kyi was also the winner of this year's Nobel Peace prize.

The IGLHRC and The ILGA are calling for a letter-writing campaign to protest these atrocities. To join in these efforts you can write Ambassador U Thang and Mr. U Ohn Gyaw, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Embassy of Myanmar, 2300 "S" Street NW, Washington, DC 20008 or fax them at (202) 332-9046. You can also write Mr. H. E. Kyaw Min, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar to The United Nations, 10

East 77th Street, New York, NY 10021, or fax him at (212) 737-2421.

NEWS FROM GHANA

The Afro Lesbian and Gay Club is discreetly trying to connect with lesbians and gays internationally. Their goals are to improve awareness of AIDS/HIV, and gain release for all gays who were imprisoned for being homosexual. Homosexuality is illegal in Ghana. The group is also fundraising to create a safe meeting space for lesbians and gays in Ghana.

If you are interested in making a contribution or want additional information on the organization they can be reached through the International Lesbian and Gay Association, Information Secretariat, 81, rue Marche-au-Charbon, B-1000, Brussels 1, Belgium, or by fax at (32) (2) 502-2471.

KENYAN PROTESTORS ATTACKED

A crowd of approximately 50 female hunger strikers and their supporters were attacked by Nairobi police in Uhuru park. Members of the crowd were beaten—four unconscious. Shots and tear gas were fired into the crowd. The women were on a hunger-strike to appeal Attorney General Amos Wako's failure to release 52 political activists wrongly arrested. Wako Promised to review the cases, but no action was taken. The crowd drew the police's attention after Professor Wangari Maathai, the leader of the Kenyan Green Belt movement (a movement for sustainable development and justice) along with supporters joined the hunger strike. Maathai, was also beaten unconscious by police and taken to a local hospital.

Many of the protestors were mothers of the activists in jail. Some of them stripped naked to protest the actions of the police. Small groups of youths also protested the police violence by running through the street yelling anti-government slogans.

A statement made by the Kenyan government accused Maathai's party of "hijacking the mothers' strike to promote its own selfish political interests, resulting in a rapid deterioration of security." However it failed to address the cause of the women's protest or condemn the actions of its forces.

This incident is one among of many instigated by the government to squelch discontent and sabotage a multi party system. Members of opposition parties in Kenya are routinely subjected to harassment and their gatherings disbursed.

In March The World Women's Congress lead a protest campaign demanding the release of the political prisoners. You can join this protest by writing: Daniel Arap Moi, President of The Republic of Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya. Send a copy to Mr. Amos Wako, Attorney General. They can be faxed at (254) (2) 33-7340.

LATIN AMERICA'S MOST REPRESSIVE SODOMY LAW

On June 11 Nicaragua's National Assembly voted to impose the strictest sodomy law, Article 205, on its citizens. With a narrow margin of only 4 votes the legislation passed the National Assembly and is headed to President Violeta Barrios de Chamorro for ratification on July 11.

The controversial article of the Nicaraguan penal code read: "An individual is guilty of sodomy if he or she induces, promotes, propagandizes or practices in a scandalous manner, the cohabitation between individuals of the same sex. Said individual will face punishment of one to three years in prison. If one of those who engages in these practices—even in private—were to have some other disciplinary or commanding power, as tutor, keeper, teacher, boss, guardian, or on the basis of any other concept that implicates the influence of authority or moral seduction, an additional sentence of two to four years is added."

This statute leaves room for many interpretations, most of them to the detriment of the politically active lesbian and gay community in Nicaragua. The proposed statute caught lesbians, gays and feminists by surprise. It was added on to a anti-rape ordinance in committee. Meetings are now underway to determine the movement's response to this assault on the rights of lesbians and gay men.

It is assumed the catalyst for such a massive legal attack against lesbians and gays is the formation of the coalition Working Group for a Sexuality Free of Prejudice (WGSFP). Shortly before the bill passed WGSFP announced plans for a public education campaign which addressed AIDS and safe sex, lesbian and gay rights, abortion, and a women's right to define her own sexuality. The public education campaign was also to contain a film festival, cultural events and condom distribution at several sites.

If the article is ratified, the Nicaraguan Center for Constitutional Rights intends to challenge this law before the Supreme Court. The statute would make AIDS and safe sex education illegal. In addition, homosexuals could not participate in the annual Toro Venado Festival in Masaya, a carnival where cross-dressing is a part of the celebration.

There is an international campaign led by the Xochiquetzal Foundation and The International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission, to put pressure on President Violeta Barrios de Chamoro to not sign Article 205. For more information call Enrigue Asis at (415) 255-8680, or Hazel Fonseca in Nicaragua at (505) (2) 25-975

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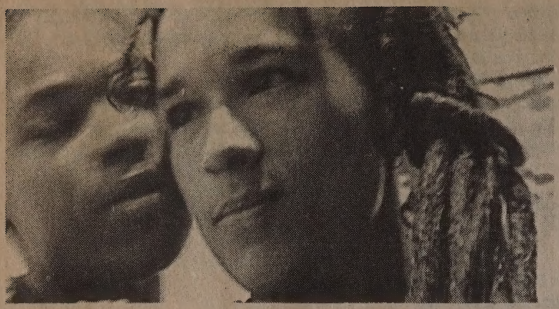
government for breaking its own tradition of democracy when it issued border restrictions against "those women traveling alone..." Members of the Press were probably the most injured since the organizers were able to fool them by publishing conflicting dates for the Encuentro to be held. In an operation smooth enough to be envied by G-men anywhere, 75 lesbians met for three days during Holy Week in Costa Rica, and were undisturbed by reporters until a bunch of drunk men rode around in a pick-up truck trying to find out what all these women were doing "alone" in a secluded compound.

If you think this is an awful lot of trouble to go through for a lesbian gathering, that is precisely the point. The next time we sit at some boring workshop at a queer conference in the U.S., that's the time to reconsider what we are doing with our hard-earned resources. It's too easy to get comfortable, and forget that we are still outlaws, even in this country. At any rate, the Third Lesbian Feminist Encuentro is scheduled to take place from August 14-16 at a private beach resort in Puerto Rico. My sources tell me that secrecy is even more crucial on the island, where bochinche travels like wildfire. There is room for 200-300 women, and the organizers are requesting workshop outlines and pre-registration ASAP. They have not received any funding and are still raising money through events and parties. Fees for the weekend are $175.00 for Latinas coming from the U.S., and $125.00 for sisters from Latin America and the Caribbean. The address to contact is: CELF. P.O. Box 8746, Caguas, Puerto Rico, 00626. ❑

The First Encuentro of Black Latin American and Caribbean Women will take place from June 14-20th in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. Write to Primer Encuentro Latinoamericano y del Caribe de Mujeres Negras, Casimiro de Moya No. 104,Gazcue, Santo Domingo, Rep_blica Dominicana. Tel: 686-6744

SPEAKING FOR OURSELVES



PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOCELYN TAYLOR

EDITOR'S NOTE

Over the past few years we've begun to realize our empowerment as a lesbian and gay People of Color community. It's no surprise that we've formed viable organizations to continue and strengthen that process. So when we set about creating this historic publication, we wanted to be sure to highlight these important and diverse community organizations.

For many of us these organizations serve a number of purposes. They allow us to get the support that we need in order to live our lives as gay men and lesbians, and as People of Color. They lend credibility to our beliefs and principles by placing them in a larger context. They give us the opportunity to get "back to our roots" as People of Color — something we often need to do as we live in this society. And, they give us a chance to meet, be with (and in some cases, cruise) others like us — because it's always good to know you're not alone.

As such, when we created COLORlife! we decided to highlight many of these organizations in a special supplement, to keep our readers informed of the many options available to them. Many of these organizations are part of The Lesbian and Gay People Of Color Steering Committee, described in full on the next page. Others are organizations of interest that we felt should be included in this supplement.

Feel free to contact these organizations, attend their meetings and special events, and support them as much as possible. They are helping to keep our lesbian and gay People of Color community alive and vital!

In Community and Struggle . . .

Lidell Jackson

AFRICAN ANCESTRAL LESBIANS UNITED FOR SOCIETAL CHANGE, INC.

African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change, Inc. (Salsa Soul) is an 18-year-old organization serving lesbians of color. The organization is committed to the spiritual, cultural, educational, economic and social empowerment of African Ancestral Lesbians and all Wimmin of Color.

We are dedicated to making our voices heard in advocacy for wimmin's rights through redefined philosophy and holistic objectives. They are as follows:
1) To awaken the spiritual power of African Ancestral Wimmin;
2) To provide educational tools for the development of progressive thinking;
3) To empower African Ancestral Wimmin to become advocates for economic, educational, health and political change;
4) To provide resources and referrals for various needs; and 5) To provide opportunities for social and cultural interaction.

African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change meets every Thursday at 8:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan. A $3 donation is requested — more if you can, less if you can't. Thursday forums consist of workshops and seminars that reflect the philosophy and objectives of the organization. In addition, we sponsor dances, cultural events, theater trips, and attend national conferences and festivals. Upcoming Thursday Forums feature the following:

June 25th — "The Empowerment of the Black Woman." Facilitator - Amina Scents and Divine Products.
July 2nd — "Games and Laughter." July 9th — "Let's Talk About Sex," a fun talk about Wimmin and sexuality.
July 16th — "Movie Night," popcorn and munchies served.
July 23rd — "Tour and Dinner." Start at 7 pm in front of The Center, walk down Hudson to A Different Light and Judith's Room Bookstores. Then hit some sex toy stores and historical sites, ending the tour with food and conversation at a Village cafe.
July 30th — "Computer Dating." Need a date? How to go about using a dating service. Facilitator - Annamarie Kirby.

Membership to African Ancestral Lesbians United for Societal Change is $35 per year, and members will receive a 10% discount at Judith's Room Bookstore, Eve's Garden, and Hair Design By Louise in Brooklyn. Our mailing address is c/o The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street, NYC 10011, 718/359-5459.

ASIAN LESBIANS OF THE EAST COAST

Asian Lesbians Of The East Coast was founded in 1983 to unite and empower Asian Pacific lesbians in the struggle against racism, sexism, heterosexism and homophobia. We provide our membership with a safe space to develop our Asian lesbian identity and define our needs as a group. We encourage the participation of all Asian and Pacific Islander lesbians to work together to meet our needs.

We are the first group of Asian Pacific lesbians to organize in the New York metropolitan area. Any Asian Pacific lesbian who contacts us is automatically placed on our mailing list free of charge. Our general meetings are on the first Saturday of each month at 3:00 pm. All Asian Pacific lesbians are welcome. Please call us for the address — we are presently looking for a more permanent meeting space.

We schedule one social activity each month — usually a potluck dinner at a member's home. Asian Pacific lesbians and friends are welcome to attend.

Our mailing list is completely confidential, and our newsletter is sent only to Asian Pacific lesbians at this time. We need women willing to participate on our fundraising, newsletter, social and political committees. Bring your ideas and enthusiasm — no experience is required, just a willing heart and lots of energy.

Since 1984 we have participated in the NYC Lesbian and Gay Pride March. We will again have a contingent this year and invite women to join us. Our work in the community includes social, political, educational, cultural and networking activities. We have worked to educate the lesbian and gay community about Asian Pacific Islander issues.

And there is more work to be done. We want to network outside the NYC lesbian and gay community, and we were instrumental in founding the Asian Pacific Lesbian Network, an organization which connects Asian Pacific lesbians across the U.S. We are currently expanding these boundaries to network with Asian lesbian groups and individuals all over the world.

Our upcoming events include the following:

Sunday, June 28th — An Informal Barbeque after the Lesbian/Gay Pride March, at member Ann Kwong's home; call for directions.
Sunday, July 11th — A Beach Outing to Robert Moses State Park; raindate is Saturday, July 18th.
Saturday, July 25th — Cross Dressing Party, Hosted by ALOEC.

For more information about Asian Lesbians of the East Coast, call 212/517-5598 or write to P.O. Box 850, NYC 10002.

BRONX LESBIANS UNITED IN SISTERHOOD

Bronx Lesbians United in Sisterhood was founded in 1988 in response to the lack of an organized visible lesbian community in the Bronx. An ad in WomaNews inviting all Bronx lesbians who were sick of traveling to Manhattan to join a brunch/social club produced over 50 phone calls in the first week alone!

BLUeS began as a multicultural, multiracial organization, and has maintained racial parity throughout.
We held our first conference, "Organizing the Forgotten Borough," in 1990 at Bronx Community College. Our second conference in 1991, "Multiracial Organizing, Bridging the Gap," held at Lehman College, was a great success and truly reflected the diversity of the lesbian community. In 1992 we joined forces with our brother organization, Gay Men Of The Bronx, and hosted the first

citywide conference, "We Are Everywhere."

BLUeS continues to thrive and serve the needs of the Bronx lesbian community, including lesbian mothers, poor lesbians, and lesbians with HIV. We meet regularly on the 2nd Wednesday of every month, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm, at One Fordham Plaza, Suite 900, in The Bronx, and on every 4th Friday from 6:00 to 8:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan. We have many social ongoing events. Call us at 212/330-9196, or write us at P.O. Box 1738, Bronx, NY 10451 for further information.

THE CENTER FOR ANTI-VIOLENCE EDUCATION/BROOKLYN WOMEN'S MARTIAL ARTS

The Center for Anti-Violence Education/Brooklyn Women's Martial Arts is a feminist and anti-racist organization that is committed to ending violence against women and children through teaching self-defense and martial arts, community education, and political activism. Founded in 1974, The Center/BWMA is New York City's oldest and largest nonprofit self-defense organization.

The Center/BWMA holds ongoing self-defense and karate classes for women and children, and Tai Ji Quan classes for women, at our school in Park Slope, Brooklyn. We teach self- defense workshops and courses for Lesbians and gay men, as well as workshops for community groups, schools and corporations. Sliding fees for all programs are based on income, starting at $5, and free childcare is available.

Our next Karate class for women begins the week of July 7th, with other classes scheduled for late summer and early fall. For information about classes, workshops and our other activities, contact us at 421 Fifth Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11215, 718/788- 1775.

CIRCLE OF VOICES

Circle Of Voices is a not-for-profit, womyn of color organization that promotes an annual Womyn of Color Music Festival and other events for charitable and educational purposes.

Our vision is to establish a creative arts environment where womyn of color can exchange information, herstories, knowledge and skills amongst each other and the community at large. The intent is to foster a collaborative and supportive environment where all womyn will have the ability to:

* increase their appreciation of the music of People of Color such as, but not limited to, bomba y plena, reggae, gospel, jazz, takac, salsa, rap, hip-hop, and nueva cancion;

* explore the modalities and techniques used by People of Color within the creative arts — i.e., music, dance, art, literature, etc.

* develop a deeper appreciation and respect for the spiritual expressions of People of Color.

You may be asking yourself, "What can I possibly do to make a difference in this project?" Well, the answer is: Your participation can make all the difference in the world! This is your opportunity to affect change, to create a women's music festival that will respect and honor your music and culture . . . and to learn about the music and cultures of others.

We are actively recruiting for a diverse group of core organizers and participants. If you'd like to complete the Circle, write to Circle Of Voices, 891 Myrtle Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11206, or call 718/387-2119.

THE GAY AFRICAN AMERICANS OF WESTCHESTER

"I want to start an organization to save my life." — Essex Hemphill

The Gay African Americans of Westchester (The G.A.A.) was founded in October 1989. The group is the first and only organizing effort of gay and lesbian African Americans in Westchester County.

The purpose of the group is to address the needs of gay and lesbian African Americans in Westchester County. We are dedicated to developing and nurturing a positive self-image,and providing support and referral services. Our meetings focus on issues relevant to ourselves as gays and lesbians, and as African Americans.

Various meetings and social events are planning for the coming months. Contact Ed at 914/376-0727 for further information.

GROUP SUPPORT = SELF-EMPOWERMENT

GAY ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER MEN OF NEW YORK

We are Asian and Pacific Islander (A&PI) gay and bisexual men committed to creating for ourselves a supportive, social, political and educational space in the New York City area, and to addressing our needs as A&PIs and as gay and bisexual men of color.

We come together to affirm our lives and to combat the isolation and invisibility we face as a result of our exclusion and omission from the lesbian/gay/bisexual and A&PI communities specifically, and from society in general.

We seek to critically understand and proactively challenge the social conditions which deny us our wholeness. We work together to implement a political agenda that includes organizing ourselves and in coalition with other groups against racism, homophobia/heterosexism, sexism and HIV/AIDS.

Since GAPIMNY's founding in the spring of 1990, we have organized over the past two years with Asian Lesbians Of The East Coast, South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association, Kambal sa Lusog, Korean Lesbian and Gay Organization, Men of All Colors Together/New York, Gay Men of African Descent, the A&PI Caucus of ACT UP, Silk Dragons, Committee Against Anti-Asian Violence, the Asian and Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS, and with a multiracial group of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and straights to form the now-infamous "Heat Is On Miss Saigon" Coalition, protesting the Broadway musical "Miss Saigon", and Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund's use of this racist and sexist play for its fundraiser.

GAPIMNY meets every 3rd Friday at 8:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan, in addition to sponsoring socials, special events and retreats. A "QUEER 'N' ASIAN" pre-Pride reception will take place on Saturday, June 27th. For more information, or to add your name to our mailing list, contact John at 718/788-5608,

Scott at 212/932-8184, Steve at 201/420-7562 or Manny at 212/490-3446. Or write GAPIMNY at P.O. Box 830, Knickerbocker Station, NYC 10002.

GAY MEN OF AFRICAN DESCENT, INC.

Gay Men of African Descent is a supportive organization of African, African American, Caribbean and Hispanic/Latino men of color, dedicated to the development of our lesbian and gay community, and to addressing the needs of our community. We focus on advocacy, health education and consciousness-raising, and are committed to fighting racism, sexism and homophobia, while creating nurturing environments that affirm, celebrate and empower gay men of African descent in all our diversity.

We have a membership of 250 (full and half-year memberships are available), and a mailing list upwards of 1,200. We publish a monthly Newsletter/Calendar, mailed free to all paid members and organizations (all others may receive a subscription for $10/year).

GMAD meets every Friday at 8:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan. We publish a weekly community activity bulletin which is available to meeting attendees, as part of a general information table which we set up at every meeting.

Our upcoming events include the following:

July — Our 6th Annual GMAD Picnic in Prospect Park,Brooklyn. All are invited.
August — Our 2nd Annual GMAD Boatride around Manhattan, co- sponsored this year with Lavender Light Gospel Choir. Tickets are $25.
September — Our "End Of Summer Dance Jam" (time and place TBD).

For more information, contact GMAD at 150 West 26th Street, Suite 503, NYC 10001, 212/741-3462, FAX: 807-1806.

GAY MEN OF THE BRONX

Gay Men Of The Bronx was born on August 21, 1990. The organization was created to provide a safe space where gay men who live in The Bronx could come together. As a result, Bronx gay men have become active in shaping the organization and creating a sense of community among ourselves.

GMOB is a multiethnic, multicultural organization, with the majority of the active members being Latino, African American and European American. Most GMOBsters live and/or work in The Bronx, but there are several regular active members from upper Manhattan, Queens and Brooklyn.

GMOB sponsors monthly rap sessions on topics which include incest and sexual abuse, handling grief, sexual stereotypes, and coming out. The last Tuesday of each month the group sponsors a series of educational forums and workshops on safer sex, relations between lesbians and gay men, parenting, and a wide variety of other topics.

During the summer months GMOB has the following special events planned: a Hawaiian Luau, Beach Party at Orchard Beach, Visit to the Historic Wave Hill Mansion, Weekend at Rainbow Mountain, Dinners at local Bronx restaurants, Trip to Fire Island, and an Anniversary Celebration. In the fall, GMOB will plan an Autumn Picnic, visits to wineries, apple-picking, a day at the Botanical Garden's Annual Harvest Festival, and the Grand Hallowe'en Costume Ball.

GMOB has general business meetings the first Tuesday of every month at One Fordham Plaza, Suite 903, from 6-9 pm, and the third Wednesday of every month at Lincoln Hospital in The Bronx, in the first floor conference rooms, 7-9 pm.

For further information on any events or meetings, call Jimmy at 212/365-6239, Ed at 792-8078, or Charles (Spanish) at 378-3497, or write to us at P.O. Box 511, Bronx, NY 10451.

INNOVATIVE WOMEN'S CALENDAR OF CONNECTIONS

By publicizing events, promoting your talents and making you aware of relevant topics and issues for discussion, Innovative Women's Calendar Of Connections serves as a vehicle for Lesbians to connect.

Created in 1988 as an answer to the demand for "other ways to meet women besides dancing," Innovative Women connects you with many opportunities to do the things you like, with women like you. Through advertising, subscribing and publication, the Calendar Of Connections links you with women and organizations in the surrounding areas of New York City, Washington, D.C., Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Connecticut, as well as New York State. If you're traveling even farther, we can still connect you to women like yourself.

No matter what your interests are, Innovative Women will connect you to other women or organizations that share the same. Just call us at 212/580-9624 for any connections you may desire.

(Look for the Calendar Of Connections to resume publication in 1993.]

LAS BUENAS AMIGAS

Las Buenas Amigas was formed in November of 1986 by a group of Latina lesbians from the New York/New Jersey area. We are first-generation Latin Americans — we are immigrants, working women, mothers, students, artists and activists.

Together we make our presence felt by creating a space within the Latino community and the lesbian and gay community . . . we raise our consciousness and fight against our oppression as Latina lesbians and women of color in the United States. The group has changed many times since the beginning, but we maintain these basic principles.

The structure of Las Buenas Amigas is such that any Latina lesbian who attends a meeting can be a member, and participate fully by working with our programming, newsletter or finance committees. We maintain a mailing list of over 250 names, and periodically send out mailings of workshop topics, cultural events, political events, etc.

Any member can suggest a workshop or event, and can work with the programming committee to organize it. Our decisions are gen-

erally made by consensus.

We meet the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month, from 2:00 to 4:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan. Our discussions are held in Spanish and English, whichever language is more comfortable for the speaker. Upcoming Sunday meetings include the following:
July 5th — No meeting due to July 4th holiday. July 19th — "Sado-Masochism!" Just about everything you've ever wanted to know . . . come in your favorite outfits and teach us a thing or two.
August 2nd — "Miniature Golf Day." Transportation from convenient locations in NYC and NJ will be arranged.
August 16th — "Sports Day." For the Sport and details, please call.
September 6th — No meeting due to Labor Day holiday.

You can contact us by writing c/o The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street, NYC 10023, or by calling Nancy at 212/749-0405.

LATINO GAY MEN OF NEW YORK

Latino Gay Men of New York was founded on January 19, 1991 as a multicultural, multiracial, multilingual group for men of Latin American and Caribbean descent, who meet for social, cultural, supportive and political activities throughout the five boroughs of New York City.

From a relatively unstructured format, the organization has evolved into a membership organization whose day-to-day affairs are governed by a Board Of Directors, currently composed of 11 men. The organization is also in the process of tightening up its structure in order to secure incorporation and tax-exempt status.

Currently Latino Gay Men of New York publishes a bilingual monthly bulletin, and hosts different types of activities during the year. Any person, whether a formal member of the organization or not, can approach the Activities Committee with possible projects and activities.

LGMNY intends to empower gay men of Latino descent — primarily those who live in New York City, although membership is not restricted by reason of residence. The organization also seeks visibility and respect for gay Latinos in the straight Latino world and the rest of the gay community. Our philosophy creates an environment where men of Spanish-speaking/-descent can come together and share, dialogue and strategize on issues pertinent to our community.

At the present time, the majority of Latinos attending our activities are of Puerto Rican descent, with a smaller number of Dominicans, Cubans and Ecuadorians also present. We are seeking to bring in larger numbers of men of other nationalities, and encourage Latino men from all national groups to become actively involved.

We recognize that individuals are attracted to different types of activities. As the organization wants to be inclusive of all aspects of our community, we provide balance in our scheduling of events. Some have been strictly social, such as dances and picnics; others, like marches, demonstrations and media appearances, overwhelmingly political; while others are a combination of both, such as our cultural- and health-related activities.

Because we plan our activities on a month-to-month basis, it is difficult to advise people of upcoming events. However, be advised that we will be holding a celebration of the life of Latin diva La Lupe before the end of the summer. The best way to keep informed in advance is by receiving our bulletin. To do so, please call Arturo Perez, our mailing list czar, at 718/267- 0702, or Julio Discent at 212/740-7249.

LAVENDER LIGHT: THE BLACK AND PEOPLE OF ALL COLORS LESBIAN AND GAY GOSPEL CHOIR

Lavender Light: The Black and People of All Colors Lesbian and Gay Gospel Choir was founded in February of 1985 by Chas Bennett Brack, Lidell Jackson and Tony Teal, with the purpose of keeping alive the Black Gospel Music Tradition in an environment supportive to lesbian and gay people.

While Lavender Light includes members of many ethnic backgrounds, the Choir has a special ministry to Black lesbians and gays, who have historically been pressured by their communities to choose between their Blackness and their Gayness.

In keeping with the tradition of Gospel, Lavender Light requires of its members a serious commitment to the Black Gospel Music Tradition. This includes rehearsing and performing music

the Black Gospel idiom, as well as working within the Black spel Music Tradition — being integrally involved in all Choir- ated activities, and offering support and assistance whenever essary.

We have received tremendous energy and support from lesbian, gay male and People of Color communities, and ve been represented in numerous concerts since our inception. e Choir's repertoire includes gospel old and new, spirituals d anthems.

e have two major Concerts a year — our Annual Spring and Fall ncerts, held at the Friends Meeting House. We will also be the tured performers at the 9th Annual Lesbian and Gay Community vices Center Garden Party on Monday, June 29th. And we per- m annually at the Joint Kwanzaa Ceremony held at The Center ary December.

r rehearsals are every Monday, 6:00 to 9:00 pm, at The ends Meeting House, 221 East 15th Street, between 2nd and d Avenues in Manhattan. For more information contact co- nder Chas Bennett Brack at 178 Clermont Avenue, Brooklyn, 11205, 718/624-1196.

MAMA DOESN'T KNOW! PRODUCTIONS

MAMA DOESN'T KNOW! Productions is a multicultur- multiracial, bi-gender, multiclass lesbian and gay People of lor production company that is committed to promoting posi- e images of lesbian and gays of color through the arts.

MDK! P was created out of a need to see, hear and rn about new, relatively new, unknown and emerging voices he lesbian and gay People of Color community. We are nmitted to working with people of varying sexual orienta- ns, ethnic, racial, cultural and class backgrounds. Any orga- ation that MAMA DOESN'T KNOW! Productions supports, ough technical assistance, production assistance, planning, working, etc., must encompass a multicultural, multiracial, lticlass community.

Established in 1987 by Jacquie Bishop, MAMA DOESN'T OW! Productions has committed itself to the seven principles of anzaa: Umoja (Unity), Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), Ujima llective Work and Responsibility), Ujamma (Cooperative nomics), Nia (Purpose), Kuumba (Creativity) and Imani (Faith). e have also committed ourselves to the belief that "you can edu- e through entertainment."

more information about MAMA DOESN'T KNOW! ductions, write to us c/o The Center, 208 West 13th Street, w York, New York 10011 or call Jacquie Bishop at 8/399-0439.

MEN OF ALL COLORS TOGETHER/NEW YORK, INC.

The effects of racism are all too evident in the gay nmunity, as well as in the larger society. We are con- ned that racism affects our personal lives as well.

Men of All Colors Together/NY is a multiracial organi- ion of gay men committed to addressing and combatting ism and discrimination in the lesbian and gay male communi- and to providing a supportive environment for less oppressive multiracial relating among gay men.

Founded in June 1980 as "Black and White Men Together/NY", MACT/NY was created to open up channels of communication among gay men of all races and colors, and to provide a forum for discussing and confronting issues of racism as well as sexism and homophobia in our community and in our lives.

MACT/NY is one of a number of MACT and BWMT chapters throughout the country, all under the aegis of the NABWMT: National Association of Black and White Men Together. There is also an NABWMT affiliate, Grupo Gay da Bahia, in Brazil. We attend NABWMT Conventions annually, and visit with other MACT/BWMT chapters several times a year.

We meet every Friday evening at 8:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan. We also publish a monthly Information Bulletin, which gives a listing of Friday night activities and other special events scheduled throughout the month. The Newsletter is disseminated to over 700 members, subscribers, prisoners, media contacts, writers, activists, politicians, lesbian and gay organizations, and other MACT/BWMT chapters, as well as international lesbian and gay contacts.

Membership to MACT/NY is $25 annually, with Newsletter subscriptions available at $15 annually.

In particular, be sure to join us at our 7th Annual Circleline BoatRide Cruise and Disco on Tuesday, June 30th (the Tuesday after Lesbian/Gay Pride Sunday), 7:30 pm at Pier 83, 42nd Street at the Hudson River. Tickets are $20, or $15 before June 23rd or for groups of 10 or more.

For more information about MACT/NY, contact us at P.O. Box 1518, Ansonia Station, NYC 10023, 212/222-9794.

THE MINORITY TASK FORCE ON AIDS

The Minority Task Force on AIDS was formed in early 1986. The formation of the MTFA was a direct result of a conference, held at City College in October 1985, sponsored jointly by the Manhattan Borough President's Office and the New York City Council of Churches. This conference was one of the first organized forums to examine the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on people and communities of color.

At the time of its formation, the MTFA was a unit of the NYC Council of Churches. The MTFA was incorporated as a separate not-for-profit agency in February 1988, and was certified by the IRS as a tax-exempt, 501(c)(3) agency in November 1989.

The Minority Task Force on AIDS was formed to provide an organized, community-based response to the impact of the HIV/AIDS epidemic on people and communities of color. The mission of the MTFA was, and continues to be, threefold:

1) To advocate for services and funding that are responsive to the needs of people and comunities of color.

2) To prevent the spread of HIV infection by pro viding education and outreach programs target ing people and communities of color.

3) To care for people who are affected by the

HIV/AIDS epidemic by providing direct social services and referral to other needed services.

One third of our MTFA staff is bilingual (English and Spanish). Over one-half of our staff self-identify as lesbians and gay men. Our staff also includes people living with HIV infection. Currently The MTFA is the largest community-based AIDS service provider in NYC that is controlled and operated by People of Color.

Our next Volunteer Orientation Support Groups will be held on Saturday, July 11th. We are also pleased to announce a Gala Benefit Fundraiser, organized by RAD Productions, on July 10th, 11th and 18th at De De's, 208 West 70th Street; for ticket info call 212/927-5161.

For further information on The Minority Task Force on AIDS, contact us at 505 Eighth Avenue, 16th Floor, NYC 10018, 212/563-8340.

THE MULTICULTURALISM COMMITTEE OF CENTER KIDS, THE FAMILY PROJECT OF THE CENTER

Center Kids, The Family Project of The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, began in the summer of 1988, and currently has over 1,000 families on our mailing list. We are composed of people of all colors, ethnic backgrounds, ages and religious beliefs.

Center Kids was created by and for families headed by lesbians and gay men who are raising children, lesbians and gay men who are interested in becoming parents, and people interested in spending time with the families of gay men and lesbians.

The Multiculturalism Committee of Center Kids sponsors regular events to celebrate our diverse heritage within our various communities. We sponsor support groups for single parents, older kids, parents of older kids, adoption, and alternative insemination. We sponsor forums of interest to the gay and lesbian community, such as our Forum on Legal Issues for Families, and our Forum on How to Prepare Our Children for the Straight World. In addition, we try to educate the public on issues of concern to lesbian and gay families.

We meet at least once a month, either for an unstructured social gathering, to attend events of interest to our families such as shows geared towards children, to go on field trips to places such as museums, or for structured activities such as a pool party. Upcoming summer activities include the following:

1st Sunday of each month at The Center — The Considering Adoption Group from 6:00 to 7:00 pm, and The Adoption Support Group from 7:00 to 8:30 pm.

1st Thursday of each month at The Center — The Planning Biological Parenthood Group from 6:00 to 8:00 pm.

4th Tuesday of each month at The Center — The Lesbians Considering Parenthood Group from 6:30 to 8:00 pm.

In addition, on Saturday, June 20th, Center Kids will have our Annual Lesbian/Gay Pride Family Picnic in Central Park, where we will be joined this year by our friends from The Lesbian and Gay People Of Color Steering Committee — at the 86th Street and Central Park West Playground — bring a lunch, and swimsuits for the children's sprinklers. Other July and August outings include Great Adventures Amusement Park, Sesame Street Park, The New York Aquarium, Jones Beach State Park, and a picnic in Prospect Park.

You can contact us by writing c/o The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street, NYC 10023, or by calling Doug Robinson at 718/248-8073.

OTHER COUNTRIES

Other Countries, the Black Gay Men's Writing Collective, began in New York City in 1986 with a group of Black gay men who had worked as writers and organizers with The Blackheart Collective.

We were founded out of the passionate belief that the lives, the visions and the voices of Gay Men of African Heritage are inherently valuable; the recognition of the dearth of enduring forums where we and our perspectives are welcomed or nurtured; and the commitment to provide continuous opportunities for our precious culture to develop and be shared, both with other Black gay men and with the rest of our communities.

We are a community of writers, dedicated to affirming and documenting our experiences as Gay Men of African Heritage. Our organizational mission is to create a visible and enduring cultural institution committed to nurturing and preserving our creative expressions through publication, presentations and community outreach. An integral part of our role is to function as an institutional framework through which Black gay men can work collectively towards our own empowerment.

Upcoming events include:

• Wednesday, June 24th — "New Voices," a benefit for Other Countries, at The Nuyorican Poets Cafe, 236 East 3rd Street, 7:30 to 9:30 pm, $6 admission; and

• Friday, June 26th — "A Tribute to Joe Beam," reading and photo exhibit of pictures by photographer Bob Giard, at Artists Space, 223 West Broadway, 7:30 to 9:30 pm, free admission.

For information on our summer and fall workshops, contact us at P.O. Box 3142, Church Street Station, NYC 10008-3142, 212/505- 0506.

THE PEOPLE OF COLOR AIDS PREVENTION PROGRAM OF GAY MEN'S HEALTH CRISIS

The AIDS Prevention Program for People Of Color was established at Gay Men's Health Crisis in 1987 in order to carry the AIDS prevention message to gay men of color who were not benefitting from existing prevention efforts. The goal of the program is to provide gay Latino and Black men culturally- sensitive risk reduction information to prevent the spread of HIV and provide the skills necessary to modify behavior to reduce the risk of exposure to HIV.

The People Of Color AIDS Prevention Programs target New York men of color — specifically Black and Latino — who are gay or who have sex with men, including bisexuals. Specific interventions are developed to reach young urban Blacks and Latinos at "House Balls," bars, dance clubs, bathhouses, parks and other venues.

During the summer, a variety of events will be held to disseminate the message of safer sex and risk avoidance. These include:

• "Noche de Ronda," a Latino play which addresses homo-and AIDSphobia as well as primary safer sex educationin a comedy format;

• "Love in the Time of AIDS," a family educational and recreational event for parks in Black and Latino neighborhoods;

• Monthly presentations of the work "What's In It 4 Me: A Safer Sex Thang"; and

• Bar interventions in Manhattan and Queens.

For more information, contact the Education Department of Gay Men's Health Crisis at 129 West 20th Street, 3rd Floor, NYC 10011, 212/807-7517 or 337-3554.

RAINBOW REPERTORY THEATRE

Rainbow Repertory Theatre was founded in 1986 by Reggie Jackson to portray in real and true images lesbians and gay men of color in the theatre, and to create the drama of our lives by taking the written word from the page to the stage.

We are dedicated to the documentation and affirmation of lesbians and gay men of color through the production of our original works, through the education of the public about our lives and experiences, and through direct outreach to youth.

Our goal is to primarily present our art to gay and lesbian audiences, and to educate non-gay audiences in an attempt to make them sensitive to our issues.

Rainbow is presently launching a Center Campaign. We are in search of obtaining a space to serve the lesbian and gay People of Color groups in our community. Please help us in this search by contacting us if you have any information about spaces.

Our upcoming events include the following:

• "Performer, Pen and Process," a lecture/workshop seriesof performing artists sharing their techniques and methods of creating performance work. Workshops are on Mondays, June 22nd and 29th — place and artists to be announced.

• In addition, we will present the return of the excellent production, "TwoHeads" by the late noted Black gay playwright Philip Blackwell, from July 16th to August 1st. Four years ago Rainbow presented "TwoHeads" and started a movement . . . four years later, the words ring with even more truth and prophecy.

For more information about Rainbow Repertory Theatre or our events, contact us c/o Jeff Haskins, 466 15th Street, #2, Brooklyn, NY 11215, 718/499-8721.

SISTERS OF SOMETHING SPECIAL

Sisters Of Something Special was established in June of 1990, beginning with a small group of 35 African American women at Sheila's Restaurant in Brooklyn. There are now groups that meet in the other boroughs and in New Jersey. Our following is now 1,000-plus Sisters Strong.

Our purpose has been to provide our community with alternative meeting spaces. We've created warm, social, comfortable and networking environments that stimulate informative conversations. Our goal is to have a stronger, more connected Sisterhood Community. Supportive, therefore, empowering experiences sometimes make all the difference in the world.

Some of our group activities include: Bike Riding, Book Club, Softball, Basketball, Football, Yoga, Relationship Groups, Singles Groups, Bodybuilding, Painting, Museums, Horseback Riding, and Women in Business.

Upcoming events include the following:

• Our "2nd Year Anniversary Celebration Benefi Breakfast/Brunch" on Saturday, June 20th, 10:00 am to 5:00 pm at Sheila's, DeKalb and Adelphi Avenues in Brooklyn. Featuring the beautiful mosaic of our diverse community together in song, poetry and short works, with appearances by many of the noted lesbians of color in our community. Donations are $20, $15 for members.

- Our "Sisters Of Something Special Boat Ride" on Sunday, August 30th, 5:00 to 9:00 pm, complete with a Swimsuit and Lingerie Show, poetry, song, dance, music and hors d'oeuvres to titillate the senses. Picnic baskets welcomed. Donations are $30, $25 for members, and must be purchased in advance; space is limited, so reserve early.

For more information about Sisters Of Something Special, contact Linda Belle at P.O. Box 3612, NYC 10185, 212/714-7165.

THE SOUTH ASIAN LESBIAN AND GAY ASSOCIATION

SALGA, The South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association, was started in April 1991 as a meeting ground for gays and lesbians of South Asian descent. This includes people with ancestry from the Indian subcontinent — India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Burma.

Our current membership, over 60 members, is a diverse group of lesbians and gay men between the ages of 21 and 51, and includes South Asians from all over the world now settled in the United States.

The primary purpose of our group is to bring South Asian gays and lesbians together on both social and political levels. Secondary but equally important goals are the spread of safer sex education and AIDS information for the South Asian community in New York, as well as a resource and support group for the gay movement in India, now in its incipient stages.

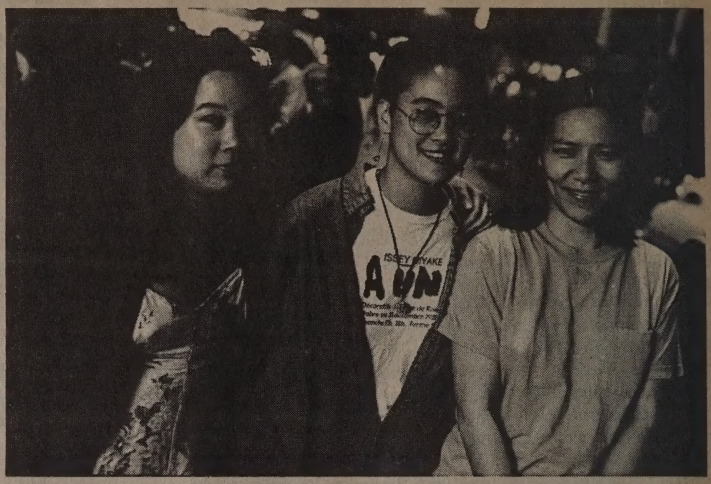
General meetings, restricted to South Asians, are held every 3rd Saturday at 8:00 pm at The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, 208 West 13th Street in Manhattan. SALGA socials, to which all South Asians and their friends are welcome, are also held monthly. For more information, contact SALGA c/o Haresh Advani, 170 East 3rd Street, #2-G, NYC 10009, 212/475-6486.

WE WAH AND BAR CHEE AMPE: NATIVE TWO SPIRITS IN NEW YORK CITY

We Wah and Bar Chee Ampe was founded in the fall of 1989, and is the first group in New York City to address the needs of Native Two Spirits (lesbians and gays) of "Turtle Island." These initial years have been important to our development, as we have come together to begin to develop a strategy for combatting culturalism and racism both within and outside the gay and lesbian community.

We Wah and Bar Chee Ampe is named after two figures in Native history who embody the spirit of our organization:

We Wah (1849-1896), a Zuni, is still recalled in stories today as "that man of enormous strength who lived a woman's daily life in woman's dress, and remained a power in his Pueblo's gravest councils." His life as a "lhamana," an individual who bridges the role of women and men, has been documented primarily by anthropologist Matilda Coxe Stevenson. We Wah spent six months in Washington, D.C. as Stevenson's guest, calling on President Grover Cleveland and Speaker Of The House John Carlisle, and circulating throughout Washington society as a Zuni "priestess."



Bar Chee Ampe, a Crow, who also lived in the 19th Century, is recalled in tradition as "one of the bravest women who ever lived . . . possessing great intellectual powers, she was endowed with extraordinary muscular strength, with the activity of a cat and the speed of an antelope." The tradition holds that Bar Chee Ampe was a Woman Chief whose life is documented in the letters of frontiersman Edwin Denig. Woman Chief, as described by Denig, was an accomplished warrior and leader who eventually married four wives. Reflecting on We Wah and Bar Chee Ampe, Denig wrote, "Strange country this, where males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex!"

In the Spirit of We Wah and Bar Chee Ampe, the primary goals of our organization are to build and support a community of Two Spirited Natives in New York; to act on all issues of concern to Indigenous People; and to increase the visibility of Native cultures within the United States. We have produced performances of Native artists, held readings of Native literature in cooperation with The Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center, and we planned and organized the first conference to address the issues of health for Two Spirits from across Turtle Island. We have also participated in the NYC Lesbian/Gay Pride March since 1990. And we are presently involved in education, advocacy and political efforts around the issues of "500 Years of Survival and Resistance of Indigenous Peoples."

The primary vehicle for our work is our newsletter, Buffalo Hide, which was first published in November 1990. Through this newsletter we continue to make visible our cultures and histories as a Two Spirited community. A yearly subscription is $15.00.

We hold monthly meetings for Native Two Spirits. For further information contact us at 111 East 14th Street, Suite 141, NYC 10003, 212/779-3151.

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Who Stands Beside You

Mother Dykes and Other Thoughts

BY MARIANA ROMO-CARMONA

As lesbian or gay People of Color, we so often stand outside mainstream society as silent witnesses to its developments, its pursuits, its claims to human history. All of this while ignoring our existence in spite of our contributions. It is a cruelly unjust world that we live in, but it is never so cruel as when events of personal importance to each one of us isolate us from each other and we must witness events alone, without being able to turn to each other for comfort and affirmation.

So too, we often stand on the fringes of queer mainstream in the United States today, and become witnesses to its direction setting. In the fight for legal and civil rights for lesbians and gay men, for example, the leadership is overwhelmingly white, or Anglo-American. And the agenda for such efforts is necessarily reflective of that perspective. I believe there are many issues that affect us as lesbian and gay Two Spirits of color, that cannot be solved on the arena of that mainstream.

Recently, my lover and I, my mother and father, attended the high school graduation of my 18 year old son, Christian. We were all prepared to be ignored or rudely prevented from spending time alone with my son, and when reality hit, we were glad we were together. But we weren't, at least I certainly wasn't, prepared for the cruelty of that reality.

Let me turn back about sixteen years ago. I came out as a lesbian, then, and my son was taken away from me by his father and his step-mother. I was coerced into giving up custody of my only son, since I was down to my last cent, an immigrant unfamiliar with the U.S. legal system, and unable to retain an attorney who would represent me in court as a lesbian mother. In 1984 I wrote an article for Gay Community News after spending 9 years in the courts fighting for "reasonable visitation rights" with my son. That juncture seemed like a small victory for my son and me. We had maintained steady but limited contact through the years, and we had established a close relationship in spite of constant interference. In other words, we loved each other still. I wrote about gay pride, marching in the New York City Pride March for the first time, and about the significance of our generation being the first openly gay or lesbian parents— open to our children and to the world. I wrote about the pain of knowing that our children could easily reject us, for being openly gay, while the U.S. social and legal system could easily disqualify us from being parents whether we were open or not. It seemed that perhaps our only defense was to be open, and most of the time I still believe it... although it is of little consolation when the perpetrator of a crime is the very system to whom we appeal for justice. As People of Color, we certainly know this.

Today, my son and I are at another juncture. He is an adult. Functionally, he is free to make his own decisions about knowing his birth mother and my side of the family. But he has been a virtual prisoner, mentally and emotionally, since he was two years old. He was able to invite me to his graduation. To hug my parents and my lover and to take in the fact that we had travelled a long way to see him simply because we loved him. That cloudy day on the football field of a New England school, crowded by a couple hundred graduates and their relatives, our small family felt smaller, overpowered by heterosexual and Anglo culture. My parents closed ranks with my lover and me, keenly aware that we were a challenge to the "American" family. My son's father and step-mother succumbed to their cowardice, their insecurity, homophobia, and racism. They took him away after a few minutes, barely allowing me time to embrace him, and to take a photograph of him. The moment was unreal, y'all. It lasted a lifetime. These are the places where all of our struggles intersect. The oppression of a lesbian mother and her son, also hurts two "perfectly straight" grandparents who hadn't seen their only grandson for years. It is extremely difficult for me to be calm now, and to accept the future with whatever it might bring. For my son and me, there may be a time when our bond as mother and son will be renewed and strengthened; when the time we lost will not matter, will not feel like such a void.

Can our mainstream gay and lesbian institutions deal with these issues? Can a lawsuit or a campaign for recognition of our relationships alleviate the desperation of sixteen years? I am not asking these questions to be obtuse. Through the years, it has been at times like these when I believe it is time to rethink our participation, our considerable contributions to this broad lesbian and gay movement, to question its leadership and see if its direction makes sense to us. Two Spirits, lesbians and gay men, and bisexuals of color— that's who I mean by us. Before we sign on to another march, another conference, another campaign, let's ask whether it really deals with the issues where we live. Our groups are small, our energies limited because we are spread so thin, but our perspectives are extremely valuable. We can't afford to be afraid to demand that our perspective become part of "the" lesbian and gay agenda— our survival depends on it. Yes, there is room for coalition building, but let us choose our allies carefully. Because we all have moments when we are isolated and we need to look around at those times and see who is standing there beside us. ❑

Challenging The Lies of International Adoption By White Lesbians & Gays

BY MI OK BRUINING

Give This Article To Any White Lesbian Or Gay Man Considering International Adoption.

Since 1984, when I began speaking out about international adoptions, I have spoken to mostly white, straight pre-adoptive and adoptive parents about my experiences as an adopted person.

In my presentations, I often introduce the historical context of my adoption— mentioning the first five years of life at an orphanage in (South) Korea, my subsequent arrival in 1966 at Kennedy International Airport where my new, white, blue-eyed family picked up this frightened five-year-old child and took me to my new home in New Jersey. I would then mention that I grew up with all the white, suburban, middle-class privileges and comforts. From a distance, it seemed like a idyllic existence, with all the charm, wonderment and curiosity of a typical, ordinary, pre-adolescent childhood.

But up close, in detail, one element was painfully wrong with the picture of my self in my family. I was the only kid who didn't look like my family members or friends. I had learned a cruel lesson in kindergarten that being Asian was to be taunted, harassed, teased and threatened. Years later I realized that I had been struggling for my emotional survival in a hostile social environment. I talked about the trauma of being told not to be sad, to feel lucky, to feel grateful, to appreciate being adopted, to get used to being harassed, verbally assaulted and finally, to accept even my own family's racist, arrogant ignorance and fearful hostility towards other people of color.

At the time, most of the pre-adoption members who heard me speak out were uncomfortable with my blatant refusal to paint pretty pictures of the positive aspects of my adoption. They were threatened by my unwillingness to gloss over my painful, oppressive experiences of being adopted. They reacted negatively to the risks I took to challenge the institution of international adoptions and present my voice.

In the most recent years of speaking out, I have been presenting six elements— the political, economic, social, cultural, racist, and clinical/psychological implications of international adoptions. These six aspects have virtually been ignored by everyone claiming and exercising their expertise on international adoptions. I dare to present how these six aspects impact upon the children and adults who are traumatized from the social construct known as "international adoptions."

The clinical trauma is loss, grief, sadness, despair, and rage in being ripped away from one's own birth mother, and one's own culture and country of birth. The pervasive isolation, feeling alienated, rejected, abandoned, unable to trust, hopeless, fearing intimacy, feeling the haunting desperation of wanting to belong somewhere, to something, to someone— this is what many, not all, but many adopted people feel.

My feminist opinion is dangerous to pre-adoption audiences when I assert that international adoption is a misogynist and racist indictment on all single, unmarried, birth mothers (of color) who are forced to relinquish their babies and children to (mostly white) adoptive parents because of economic deprivation.

The social construct of international adoptions is a punishing condemnation when it legally and socially allows one woman (the adoptive parent) to take the child of another woman (the birth mother) because the adoptive parent has more privilege than the birth mother.

My opinion is considered controversial because I believe that international adoption is a covert, but cruel act of child abuse when the adopted child who becomes an adult, is then legally, politically, and socially prevented from searching for her/his own birth mother or family— when birth records are sealed, changed or destroyed, thus denying the birth right to know who and where s/he came from. This is a violation of basic human rights.

When I maintain that to be adopted is to be a survivor of this intrapsychic trauma known as "international adoption," my opinion is discounted as hostile and non-conformist by people who support these adoptions. I am an enemy to the pro-adoption movement. I have received hate mail, have been accused of being hostile, angry, mentally ill, and of having unresolved issues with my adoptive parents. I have been told that I am destroying the hope and future of adopted children, and I have also been condemned by a few adopted Korean adults.

Most recently, I spoke at five different conferences in six weeks, and found that there are some people who agree with my opinions and perspectives. However, the most disturbing reaction I have received is from the lesbian and gay pro-adoption communities.

As a lesbian of color, a Korean woman, an Asian/Pacific lesbian, I have encountered mostly white lesbians and gay men who have adopted children of color, who believe that international adoption is a viable, positive and acceptable alternative to donor insemination and giving birth to a child.

The "lesbian baby boom" is the latest trend in parenting and I wholeheartedly encourage lesbian and gay parenting. But I adamantly do not accept nor do I condone the increasing number of mostly white lesbians and gay men who believe that trans-racial/cross-cultural adoption is a right that we, in the lesbian and gay communities, are entitled to exert. I do not support the "lesbian adoption trend."

It is my opinion that parenting is an economic, political, and social luxury, based upon the privileges we are given and the conditions we create for ourselves. When I hear of mostly white lesbians flocking to Latin American countries to pick out their little daughters and sons of color, I cringe. I feel bitterness knowing that these white lesbians are operating out of their selfish and desperate need to parent a child— any child, even a child of color, at any cost. It has long been a truism in the pro-adoption movement, that healthy, white babies are unavailable and too expensive to purchase.

I am outraged when these mostly white lesbians are attempting to fulfill their rescue fantasies— buying into the myths and lies that these children were abandoned, unwanted and willingly relinquished. I am appalled and livid when mostly white lesbians believe that these "poor, starving" children need to be saved from the "wretched poverty" of these "third world" countries, which are actively participating in black market baby-stealing and baby-selling— often legally and politically disguised as "international adoptions."

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It's A Family Affair

Our Responsibility To & For Our Children

BY DOUG ROBINSON

Growing up in a Black AME (African Methodist Episcopal) church in the 1950's, children were always welcome and heard. While our minister delivered his sermons, you could always hear babies crying or watch toddlers skillfully, and some not so skillfully, run up and down the aisles. If a child made too much noise the parent, extended family members or just other parishioners would come to the aid of the child. As the preacher built up to the climax of liturgy with sometimes a loud and commanding presence, there were always performances of Diva qualities going on in the pews by some child.

Our neighborhood was another place where kids were heard and watched. If a child was about to get in trouble or doing mischief, there always seemed to be an adult nearby to either warn or assist the young one. There always seemed to be a senior citizen or mother on the porch or in the backyard watching our every move.

Ms. Lilly lived on our block, and we kids swore she had eyes in the back of her head and could read our every thought. Ms. Lilly was a tall and striking Black woman who never seemed to age. My mother said she was in her seventies but I never believed it— I once saw her run after and catch a kid from across town who had taken our kickball.

Many children today have not experienced the wonderful benefits of a Ms. Lilly or the like. The foster families, social workers, and teachers have become the extended family of today's child. As the numbers grow in the foster care system, the most alarming fact is that over 90% of the kids are children of color. Also, the overwhelming number of these children fall in the category of special needs such as being over the age of five, having siblings or having a physical or emotional disability.

But more alarming is our lesbian and gay community's lack of response to the call of rescuing these kids. People of Color, in particular gays and lesbians, should consider becoming foster and adoptive parents. Lesbians and gays bring a wealth of knowledge and understanding to child rearing. Many of us have raised and assisted in parenting our siblings, extended family and friends' kids.

Today, there are a few foster/adoption agencies who are receptive to gays and lesbian applicants. Recently, four members of CENTER KIDS, the Family Project of the Lesbian and Gay Community Center, met with Deputy Executive Robert Little of the New York City Child Welfare Administrative and his staff to discuss discrimination in the foster/adoption system and ways to improve the process. Deputy Little acknowledged our concerns around discrimination and was open to investigating charges of any reported incidents. He was extremely receptive and welcomed our suggestions on ways to reform contracting agencies. Some the highlights of this meeting were:

Deputy Little will write a letter to all contracting agencies restating the family recruitment policy which states that an agency cannot deny an applicant based solely on sexual orientation. In addition, the letter will state that if a case worker has any personal issues around dealing with gay and lesbian families, a new case worker should be assigned.

If any lesbian or gay family feels that their application is not being handled fairly, we will be able to channel our complaints through Center Kids to a liaison from Deputy Little's office.

We were asked to do a presentation of our concerns to volunteering agencies which contract with New York City to provide foster care and adoptive services.

Commissioner Little will put Center Kids in touch with a new program which deals with orphans from the AIDS epidemic.

As members of Center Kids, we feel that we have an important responsibility to our children and our youth, to support them and care for them. We think it's equally important that the rest of our lesbian and gay community support and care for them as well. ❑

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I expect more from my white lesbian allies. I expect them to be more aware based upon their political and social oppression from homophobia, and certainly more socially conscious because they have been discriminated against in this society. When mostly white lesbians use the potential destruction of homophobia as a weapon and battle cry in their assertion and entitlement to adopt children of color from their birth countries and their birth cultures, this is absolutely unacceptable to me. This attitude is racism, cloaked in liberal white guilt and cultural imperialism.

When I hear of white lesbian adoptive parents talking to other white lesbian adoptive parents about how quickly the international adoption process took place, and the discount price of the adoption costs of the children they got from Honduras, Costa Rica, and other "underdeveloped" countries, I cannot abide it. This is an obscene sentiment shared between two parties who appear to be comparing a bargain shopping spree; the acquisition of a second-hand object, an economic transaction.

It is most disturbing that an increasing population of mostly white lesbians and gay men are becoming the consumers in the (international) adoption industry. Children of color are the commodities and products and victims of ownership and living human property, and this process is being disguised as the desire to parent a child, ignoring the grieving birth mother and the traumatized child.

I am not discounting the genuine love and caring for adopted children. I am confronting and challenging the old stereotypes, myths and lies of the international adoption industry, and presenting new social implications of international adoptions in the U.S. As a Korean, Asian/Pacific lesbian who is adopted, this is my challenge, my truth, my struggle, my pain, my healing process, my ❑

Something Different

SAGE's Intergenerational, Multicultural, Multigender, Mid-Summer Soiree!

BY BERNADETTE MCGOWEN

On April 6, 1992 a committee of People of Color from SAGE: Senior Action in a Gay Environment held its first meeting in the Sage Room at The Center. The purpose of this meeting was for lesbian and gay activists from diverse communities to come together and formulate a plan to facilitate SAGE's growth and evolution as a multicultural organization.

Many people in our community perceive SAGE to be a one-dimensional, predominantly white elderly organization. Thus a lot of people in our community were reluctant to reach out towards SAGE.

Unfortunately, we internalize stereotypes and myths about each other, which keeps us isolated and divided from one another. Whether it's based on fear, ignorance or mistrust, our lesbian and gay community is a divided community.

SAGE was founded out of a need to include and to validate lesbian and gay elders who felt isolated from the larger gay culture. We live in a society that glorifies and values people because of their youth and perceived beauty. Most people in our society fail to recognize the value of our elders, who are rich in beauty, wisdom and experience.

Building bridges and overcoming barriers that divide us requires a concerted effort from everyone. In this spirit SAGE is growing and expanding by taking initial steps towards building a multicultural organization.

SAGE recognizes the lack of interaction between the diverse groups in the lesbian and gay community. On Sunday, August 23rd at The Roxy in Manhattan, we will sponsor an event that will give people from our diverse communities an opportunity to network, socialize and get acquainted in a multicultural climate. This means that people will be interacting across age, race, sex, physical ability and gender boundaries. If you're willing to broaden your horizons, please participate in SAGE's intergenerational, multicultural, multigender, mid-summer soiree!

For more information contact SAGE, c/o The Lesbian and Gay Community Services, Center, 208 West 13th Street, NYC 10023, Julia Moss at 212/543-4977. ❑

Teenage Suicide

Higher Suicide Rates In Gay & Lesbian Teens

By Cecilia Stanton

Teenage suicide is one of the many causes of death for our gay and lesbian teens. Many studies have shown that the percentage rate of teenage suicide is higher in gay and lesbian teens than any other minorities. What is the reason for this? Well, the main reason is the lack of support for gay men and lesbians. Homosexual teens feel as if they are alone in the world and have no one to turn to for support. This is mainly due to ignorance in the society. Gay and lesbian issues have been ignored because many people feel being gay or lesbian is abnormal and definitely unacceptable; some even use religion as proof that being gay or lesbian is wrong and even quote the Bible from scriptures such as the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. But these people seem to forget that God loves everyone. Whatever the reason is that people do not accept homosexuality, it has kept families from understanding that we, as homosexuals, are just as normal as anyone else.

One story in particular that I can never forget is the story of a young teen who confided in his mother that he was gay. She in turn told him that he must pray to God so that he could be "healed" and that he must try harder to concentrate on liking girls. She then proceeded to play the church radio station in the house whenever he was home, loud enough so that he could hear it even if he was in his room. He wanted to believe that he could be healed and wanted to be "normal," but soon it got to him so he ran away from home. Soon after, his mother hound out that her son had jumped off a bridge in front of a truck and was instantly killed. She now regrets that she didn't support her son and the last thing I remember was, that she said it would have been so simple if only she would have said, "son, I love you no matter what."

The home is the first "institution" that we are in, and when searching for approval the first place we'll go is to our family, and when your family doesn't accept you it can be the worst feeling in the world. This is one of the reasons why many gay and lesbian teens take their lives and it must be stopped. How? The solution is not simple, for to solve this problem we would have to change everyone's way of thinking, and when people are set in their ways, it can be the hardest thing in the world to get them thinking differently. But all is not lost: the first step that we can take in helping others is to first educate ourselves. In a sense, we can start a trend of ridding all and any hate and discrimination we have in ourselves and accept others for who they are. Another thing we can do is to help those around us, watch for warning signs of depression in our family, friends, and loved ones. Be a helping hand and an understanding ear for someone in need of support. Let's be there for our gay and lesbian teen brothers and sisters, and let's start to put an end to the suffering of our youth!

❑

How Else Can I Say This?

By Sheila H. Mabry

How else can I write this, but from my heart? I am bisexual. I am a Person of Color. I am part of the lesbian, gay and often-closeted bisexual community that exists within it.

I am not interested in appealing to anyone's political correctness. What's fair is fair. Nor am I interested in coalition-building, as such, because I often see coalition-building as a way in which some people tolerate (or pretend to tolerate) other people they care nothing about for a particular cause, and then cast them aside when tolerance is no longer convenient.

Why now, many ask? Why do bisexuals want inclusion now? Why should bisexuals be a visibly equal part (in the literature, on the banner, on the podium) of the Lesbian (recognized by name in only the last two years in New York) and Gay Pride Day — an equal part of the Community? Because bisexuals have been here all along. Because no fear-driven, community-imposed closets should be acceptable. Because inclusion is fair. It's time. It's been time.

In what way have bisexuals been here, you ask? I guess I must do the research necessary to prove it. The same research, I'm sure, that People of Color within and outside of this very Community have had to do to show europeans that we've existed all along.

Well, hell, I'm not doing that research! And many of us know this truth: that not all bisexuals have existed in the closet to obtain *heterosexual privilege*. Many were asked, as many of us are still asked today, to say that we are gay or lesbian because we are told that is where the significance of our struggle lies. Many argue that "It is *heterosexuals* that hate the *part* of bisexuals that enjoys, even loves, sleeping or being with persons of the same sex." Rarely do — *or can* — these people who ask us to deny (for political or emotional reasons) our full identity admit that it is often the "part" of bisexuals that enjoys, even loves, sleeping and/or being with persons of the opposite sex that *they* hate.

At a Town Meeting recently held at the Center to openly discuss *Community* (need I say, how few People of Color were present) feelings about inclusion of the word bisexual in the title of the Pride March and its literature in 1993, I was relieved to see an African American woman stand up to share her feelings. She talked of how proud she was to be an out lesbian. How she could often be mistaken for straight. She shared the significance of Pride Day to her. Pride Day, she said, was *her* day, adding that bisexual people are not being excluded from the March. *"They have a banner!"*

For many reasons, I was proud that she stood up to contribute to the debate. However, I couldn't help but look around, and think there is a tiny-little People of Color Bulletin Board in The Center and only one room named after a person of color (The Charles Angel Room.) I couldn't help but hear similar words from some who figure, "Damn, *you* have your Charles Angel Room and that People of Color Bulletin Board! What more do you want," as we fight in New York City for more than a bulletin board, a room, and half the name of a library.

It was recently, as well, that I listened to a white lesbian patronizingly tell a group of bisexuals that she could show us how to get the inclusion that we want. One way, she said, was to listen to what gay men and lesbians have to say. For instance, *as a woman*, she could not oppress us. It was ridiculous of us to think she could, because *as a woman* she doesn't have the power.

I felt she hadn't understood what many of us had shared at that meeting. It is possible in a community which is primarily lesbian and gay to oppress others who aren't. Most any time a group of people have to go before a decision-making body that is not representative of them, it is oppressive. Any time a person or group of people are asked to sit and wait for "the right time" — in essence, to be patient and polite — until another person or group of people are ready to decide — to acknowledge you, see you, hear you — it is oppressive.

I was not interested then, nor am I today, in learning how to be a good-little bisexual, just as I am not interested in being a good-little Black girl. I want to hear what people have to say — but listening should not render me invinsible.

If I felt that some of the lesbians and gay men who were shutting me out were doing so for legitimate reasons — rather than holding against me the pain of a past lover, bisexual or heterosexual; that they were not projecting their internalized hatred for the period in their process where they identified as bisexual; or that they were not asking me, as a bisexual, to prove myself in order to obtain legitimate inclusion that no person who called him or herself gay or lesbian, having only claimed it for a day, would have to — then the rejection would not be as painful.

Because people don't understand me or my identity does not mean I'll go away. I am no more interested in saying that I am a lesbian for acceptance in the gay and lesbian community than I am in saying that I am white, so that white people will understand me. Because some people will not accept me as a legitimate part of this or any other community that represents me, does not mean I'll go away. Just as People of Color and women — inside and outside of this community — are not going away, bisexuals are not going away.

As a bisexual Woman of Color, I am often alienated by people I love — asked to claim some part of me before I claim another. I proudly claim my whole self, and encourage others to do the same. It is my commitment to claiming all I am that helps me — helps a people — to survive.

I'm open to honest discussion. I am not going anywhere. ❑

Mental and Physical Health Care Issues for Lesbian and Gay Communities of Color

BY CHEZIA CARRAWAY

We are inundated with a constant onslaught of oppressions. Racism, classism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, all combine to foster the invisibility of the physical and mental health issues affecting lesbians and gay men. In addition, the ignorance of service providers about our lives directly contributes to our hesitation in revealing ourselves, and places our health in peril.

Our emotional health is often overlooked in existing systems. We are labeled as drug abusers or alcoholics when the underlying cause is incest, homelessness, or other problems. Racism compounds the devastation of substance abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, AIDS/HIV, mental illness, poverty, homelessness, unemployment, reproductive health, cancer and a host of other factors that contribute daily to the death of our family members, our friends, and our lovers. Our communities are the most underserved, poorly funded, and the first to be ignored by the greater health care system. We continue to suffer more intensely from the effects of poor mental and physical health care services. These combined weapons and long term deprivation in our communities equals nothing less than genocide.

Obtaining better services from health care providers solves only half the problem. The other half could be solved by achieving a national health care program that would ensure the right to quality health care for everybody, not just the rich. A national health care program must be about more than just provision of care; it must not duplicate the racist, sexist, homophobic and classist systems that already permeate our existing health care programs.

It will be our intention to address in these pages the complex health concerns, treatments and significant trends from the point of view of communities of color, while paying significant attention to a wholistic approach to health care. COLORLife! will cover our needs, our concerns, and our definition of the physical and mental health issues facing our communities.

It is the ultimate act of empowerment to speak in your own tongue. We would like our readers to use these pages to articulate their concerns, to offer their remedies, and to learn of sensitive providers and new strategies to help take control of our health needs.

Our communities of color are under siege. Nothing short of a comprehensive approach to these issues will positively impact our people's struggle for survival in the U.S. and across the globe. AIDS/HIV is not the only health concern of the lesbian and gay communities of color, and we will strive to report on relevant issues to the entire community of color.

FUTURE TOPICS

AIDS/HIV - effects on men, women, teens, and children of color; HIV/AIDS related violence; preventive medications; mental health issues; needle distribution.

Cancer - breast and cervical cancer; cancers indicative to our community; care groups; innovative treatments; preventive education; non-traditional treatments.

Substance abuses - alcoholism; illegal and legal drugs; food addictions and disorders; treatment; support services.

Mental health - lesbian and gay relationships; child sexual abuse; domestic violence; physical abuse; deppression and other "mental illnesses;" therapies; support groups; parenting; bereavement and loss; mediation; burn-out.

Lesbian health issues - older lesbians; sensitive providers; advocacy; gynecological health; AIDS/HIV impact; safer sex issues.

Children's health concerns - adolescent health, AIDS/HIV prevention; multicultural curricula.

These topics are only a beginning, a partial list to get us started thinking. We believe that COLORLife! will be a strong voice and powerful tool of the lesbian and gay people of color community. There is power in the written word. We must utilize this publication as one way to let the world know we exist; that we rely on mental and physical health services, and that we will no longer tolerate invisibility. We are everywhere. ❑

The Benefits of AIDS Test Counseling

BY CECILIA STANTON

AIDS... It's a difficult subject. What can even be more difficult to deal with is deciding to be tested. Counseling before you're tested may seem like a drag because after all, you only want to know if you're positive or negative, right? Wrong! Many people don't know much about AIDS or HIV, counseling can help you learn about it in terms you can understand.

Of course, no matter how gently put, the news that you're HIV positive will never be taken lightly but, with the help of counseling you can learn more about yourself and be able to deal with a positive result a little better. You'll understand about what being HIV positive means and how it will change your life, if it changes at all. You'll also learn how to deal with telling family and friends, teaching them about the HIV infection and what role they play in your life, in terms of guidance, acceptance and support.

Now, what if you're negative. Will the counseling be a waste? Of course not! Knowing that you're negative is only the beginning. With counseling you will be able to learn just how you can prevent a positive result in the future. You will learn about how to have safe sex. After all, HIV is a serious viral infection. We must protect ourselves as bets as we can and, the more we know about HIV the better we can protect ourselves. ❑

In The Name of Desire

BY LAROSE PARRIS

Those Fluttering Objects of Desire
Exit Art, 578 Broadway
May 2-30

Upon entering Exit Art, one may have been struck by its resemblance to a futuristic video observatory. Stark white walls; sparse furnishings; suspended, coin-operated television monitors; and bright red telephones throughout the gallery comprised "Those Fluttering Objects of Desire," Shu Lea Cheang's joint video/audio installation. After you tune into "channels of desire" or dial 1-900-DESIRES, however, the exhibit reveals its true political and artistic points of reference—the pornographic peep show and the telephone's metamorphosis into an object of desire.

Placed on a subtle diagonal, the quintet of television monitors lures the viewer with sexual imagery that acts as a trailer of the featured videos themselves; the preview of choice appears to be flexing and relaxing buttocks. To sample "channels of desire," viewers position themselves on stools, insert a quarter into the telephone beneath the T.V. monitor, watch and listen. Instantly, they are transported to the video artists' creative conscience.

According to Cheang, the installation sprang from her desire to confront sexual politics through diverse artistic forums and perspectives. "I wanted to show different points of view, including women of all different racial backgrounds, different sexual preferences—lesbian and straight—so that the final piece is more intimate....It's about sexual issues. Sex is a very private matter, but at the same time, when it becomes public debate then the language of sex should become public domain."

Video artist Mary Ann Toman's reel was a compilation of music, imagery, and text. Shots of herself while pregnant were taken from various angles. As one image gave way to another, words appeared on screen: "american chinese baby; asian baby caucasian; double erotic fuck gift; genes hate image...." This alphabetical narrative ran down the screen as a warped recording of the children's alphabet song, mixed with a recital of the Chinese Pinyin alphabet, provided abstract harmony to the segment's ambiguous focus on racial identity. In Toman's eyes the reel describes "the creation of a bi-racial baby."

Similarly lesbian video artist Cheryl Dunye's piece, as she expressed, "addresses the issue of racism in the lesbian community by using the issue of desire" to initiate dialogue.

For those who preferred to let their imaginations create landscapes of erotic fantasy, "1-900-DESIRES" was a direct line to revolutionary poetry read by women writers, including bell hooks. hooks' piece ("Open your heart and expose it") presented itself as a dreamy tribute of hope to a lover. Rising and falling with subtle inflections, hooks' words poignantly expressed her feelings on relationships, which were tempered with interpretations of The Autobiography of Malcolm X and Jessica Benjamin's The Bonds of Love. Seemingly offering her personal experiences as a threshold to the listener's own awareness, hooks' piece embodied the delicate balance between our personal and political selves.

This all-female installation brought erotica out of the dark vestibules of porno palaces and into the public galleries of "acceptable" art, where a diverse group of women demonstrated the power of reclaiming erotica as a medium for sociopolitical issues and self-exploration.

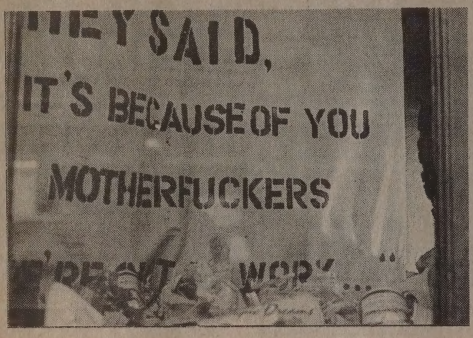
"Those Fluttering Objects of Desire" offered a myriad of sexual imagery, experiences, and interpretations. This all-female installation brought erotica out of the dark vestibules of porno palaces and into the public galleries of "acceptable" art, where a diverse group of women demonstrated the power of reclaiming erotica as a medium for sociopolitical issues and self-exploration. By baring their sexual souls, the artists presented a very intimate side of themselves, a side that may be suppressed in one's pursuit of political correctness. Through "Desire," however, the artists were able to express their whole selves, and the union of personal and political was complete. ❑

INJUSTICE: Made in America

Remembering Vincent Chin 1955-1982

Art In General, 79 Walker Street

Ten years ago, a young Chinese American man named Vincent Chin was celebrating his last day of bachelorhood at a nightclub in Detroit when two white male autoworkers started a fight with him. "It's because of you m***s that we're out of a job!," they shouted at him. Hours later, the two found him in a McDonald's, dragged him to the parking lot, and as one man held Chin down, the other pummeled his skull with a baseball bat — "like he was going for a home run." Four days later, Vincent Chin died of his wounds. Mistaking Chin for someone of Japanese descent and blaming the problems of the U.S. auto industry on the Japanese people was their only justification. In a civil rights suit, one of the murderers was convicted and sentenced to 25 years in prison. This conviction was overturned in appeals court on technical grounds, and in the end the two murderers were punished by having to pay a $3,000 fine and three years of probation! During the sentencing the attendant judge remarked, "These are not the kindof people we send to jail, these are outstanding family people"(leaving one to wonder what kind of values these racist people -- just like homophobes and gaybashers — teach their kids). Asian American activists organized after the murder made it clear that Chin's death would not go unpunished. In the 10-year interim since the death of Vincent Chin, there has been an alarming rise in anti-Asian violence, bias-related crimes and Japan-bashing, which usually crashes andshatters on the backs of Asian Americans. Hate crimes against Asians in New York City have presently increased to a staggering 680 percent! And while anti-Asian and anti-gay are the categories that have suffered the highest increase in hate crimes reported (who knows how many don't get reported), there is seldom any coverage about Asian Americans being the victims of hate crimes or discrimination. If lesbians and gay men are perceived to be "invisible," Asians are not to be heard from. So those who are Asian and queer, are rendered invisible and silent. They are not to be seen, not to be heard. To mark the 10th anniversary of Chin's death, four AsianAmerican artists have created a window installation, "Injustice:Made In America," presently on the street level at Art In General. This powerful installation seriously addresses this injustice by examining the twists and turns in the story of Chin's murder and its aftermath, as well as its significance 10 years later. One of the artists comments: "Thinking about violence, the constructions of identity and memory, we will create a memorial and at the same time question our relation to this memory. The name Vincent Chin evokes the struggle of Asian Americans for justice under the law, and the contradictions of being Asian American in a racist society that casts Asians as foreign and 'the enemy'." "Injustice: Made In America," presented by Godzilla: The Asian American Arts Network in cooperation with The CommitteeAgainst Anti-Asian Violence, is scheduled to run through Monday, July 6th at Art In General, 79 Walker Street, south of Canal. Museum hours are Tuesdays thru Saturdays, 12 Noon to 6 pm, and admission is free. For more info call Art In General at 212/219-0473. In addition, on Tuesday, June 23rd at 7 pm there will be a Candlelight Vigil to remember the death of Vincent Chin, and to remember all others who have suffered from anti-Asian and bias-related violence. Held at Confucius Plaza (Bayard and BoweryStreets), the event is organized by The Coalition to CommemorateVincent Chin, c/o Youth for Philippine Action, 301 West 22nd Street, #65, NYC 10011, 212/627-1386. Bring friends and candles. ❑



BROADENING AGENDER

Movement Research Takes on Gender and the Politics of the NEA

BY JACK WATERS

On the unseasonably hot and humid evening of Monday, September 16, 1991, the large Movement Research (MR) gathering at Judson Memorial Church resembled a Southern Baptist revival meeting. Instead of wielding prayer books, however, the congregants— members of the dance, performance, and media arts communities— fanned themselves with MR's latest Performance Journal issue. Preceded by performances by Diane Torr and Yoshiko Chuma, a town meeting of the dance and performance community was called to discuss public reaction to the Fall 1991 Performance Journal #3 on gender performance. The panel included Bill T. Jones, Holly Hughes, Tom Kalin (the journal's editor), Torr, Chuma, Richard Elovitch (performer, activist, and former MR director), Nina Martin (board member), and MR co-directors Cathy Edwards and Guy Yarden. Two discussions developed from the meeting: The subject of gender, as broached in the controversial journal issue, and the ever-present discussion of public censorship and arts funding. According to the letter from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) read by Elovitch, the issue's guest editor, the NEA is demanding return of the small grant—less than $2,000—allocated to the publication. The letter's primary basis for rescinding the grant is not aesthetic; rather, it is cloaked in dense bureaucratic technicalities. The letter did opine, however, that Kalin—a writer and filmmaker—is not an artist.

Performance artist Jennifer Miller, another panelist, was particularly vocal in her concerns that a discussion of gender and identity

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Twin Bracelets

4th Annual NY International Festival of Lesbian and Gay Film

BY LISA K. YI

"Twin Bracelets," which recently played at The NewFestival's "4th Annual New York International Festival of Lesbianand Gay Film," opens with a view in the distance of anapproaching wedding party. The main character, Hui-hua, iswatching the procession of her future sister-in-law from thebalcony of her home. The bride, dressed in black and carrying ablack umbrella, is crying. The rest of the wedding partyaccompanying her is also in tears. They say that early tears make for an early pregnancy. After the ceremony Hui-hua runs to her friend Hsiu, who iscooking in a nearby house. They play on the beach. Hui-hua, toprove her love for Hsiu, announces that she will do anything herfriend asks her to do. When Hsiu asks her to walk into the sea,she does so, only to cry for help when she sees blood from herfirst period tinting the water red around her. Hsiu runs andcarries Hui-hua back to sit on the rocks. They later vow beforea sacred goddess to be sister/man and wife . . . and so the storybegins.

Foreshadowing their relationship and her fate later in thefilm, Hui-hua tells Hsiu, "you like men more than me." AfterHui-hua sees her brother beating his wife, she defiantly claimsthat she would rather die first than be beaten. She watches asHsiu falls in love with her arranged husband. Hui-hua herself cannot escape an arranged marriage to a rich, spoiled, westernized man. She attempts to buy back her dowry and obtain a divorce — a word that nobody seems to know. Hui-hua's sister-in-law gives her the money, but when her brotherfinds out, he gives his wife a final beating and she dies in Hui-hua's arms. Hui-hua begs her mother for money to obtain herdivorce, and she refuses, saying that her brother now needs to find a new wife and the money will be for him. Hui-hua plots to kill Hsiu when she finds that Hsiu will bemoving with her husband to another village, but changes her mindwhen she finds that Hsiu is pregnant. At their parting theyreturn to each other bracelets they'd exchanged when they tookvows to be sister/man and wife. Hui-hua, now alone, changes intoher wedding dress and commits suicide by walking into the sea. This film was almost an anthropological study of the customsand traditions of one particular village. "Twin Bracelets" takesplace in contemporary China and focuses on a traditional sectorof people whose custom for married couples only allows thehusband to visit his wife three times a year during "festival"time. Only after the wife presents her husband with a malechild, is she allowed to live with him.

Women in Chinese culture are less privileged than men andthe traditions of this village were no exception. The onlyoption for a woman other than traditional marriage seemed to bedeath. Another character, the sister-in-law's friend Jane, is inlove and happily married to her husband, but can only see eachother three times a year during festival. He breaks traditionand visits her, but they are subsequently discovered. Thevillage elders pass judgement on the couple. The husband isordered to beat his wife to death for her indiscretion. Sheinstead throws herself on a bamboo stake when she realizes thathe will follow their orders. The women in "Twin Bracelets" have a strong workingcommunity. They are the economic backbone of the village and aremost often seen working together — plowing the fields, buildingrock walls, drying cuttlefish, and mending fishing nets. Thefact that they are the major labor force explains why they canonly see their husbands three times a year, and leave the villageto live with their husbands only after they have borne a son. The film's characters are well-developed. They support oneanother and help each other — not just Hui-hua and Hsiu butsister-in-law and Jane as well. The women work hard together,not just as family units. The interdependency of the individual,family and village is essential to the survival and continuationof the village. The judgement of death for the disobedient wifeat the hands of her own husband is pronounced by the villageelder as necessary in order to maintain discipline and order inthe community — the couple is used as an example for all others. The male characters are also three-dimensional, but it'sobvious the filmmakers were not as empathetic towards them. Awide range of characters were developed: from the man in lovewith his wife who dared to break tradition and who suffered theconsequences, to Hui-hua's husband, who appears westernized and modern but who in fact fully subscribes to and takes advantage of a system of marriage that allows him to bring a whore off thestreet into his marriage room to show Hui-hua how things shouldbe done. I went to see "Twin Bracelets" to see what an Asian womanfilmmaker would be saying about Asian lesbians. I empathizedwith Hui-hua. I felt her frustration of being trapped incircumstances far beyond her control. Asian visibility in the media is scarce; Asian lesbian visibility is even less. But, as it was created, this film was not intended by thefilmmakers to be lesbian-identified . . . which is evident uponviewing the film. As a visual artist I am very concerned withtaking a work out of context. The fact that this film appearedat The New Festival — and was sponsored by our group, AsianLesbians Of The East Coast (although we weren't given theopportunity to preview the film) — implied that it was aboutlesbians in China. Only after viewing the film and hearing laterthat the filmmaker didn't create a film about lesbians, did theconfusion and disturbing feelings I had about the outcome of thefilm become understandable. "Twin Bracelets" is beautifully made, and realisticallydepicts a way of life in a traditional Chinese village . . . but it is not a Lesbian film. ❑

A white bitch
with a pink slit
between her legs
like mine,
A white girl that
probably got into
law school on the
affirmative action
birthed by black
people's struggle,
sitting on a seat
that was opened
up for her by
Rosa Parks and
Fannie Lou Hamer,
nig—no, black
people,
African Americans,
like me, marching
under fire, hoses,
broken glass
gasolined bodies
testicles sliced off,
strange fruit,
tossed to dogs.
Swinging from
trees.

strange juice

(or the murder of Latasha Harlins)

A WORK IN PROGRESS By Sapphire

I remember my boyfriend, the dark behind the brown of his eyes and how he look in his leather. I was walking with that good feeling, thinking about him, the next day of school— maybe I go, maybe I don't. You know who gives a fuck. And nothing special, you know nothing is so special except now I'm dead. It's the day I died. And the sky was red-brown gauze. You could see patches of blue if you look up but I don't hardly ever look up. My eyes on the ground feeling my feet in Orange Reeboks. What else I remember? Now that I look back it seems like the collard greens piled up on plywood boards at the door was huge green tears that sought to warn me. The day was the same. Different. I didn't do nothin'. I slid open the glass door on the refrigerator that keeps all the beverages cool; it's so hot here. My eyes glance up at the camera pointed like a gun from the corner of the wall. Fuck it. I slip the cold bottle of orange juice in my back pack, go to the counter. I'll get some gum; if she say something I'll say, aw bitch I was gonna buy this juice, you think I'm stupid. Wonder what we gonna do in school tomorrow. I be so glad to get out the ninth grade, go to high school. If I'm late for homeroom one more time...

"Oh bitch please! I was gonna pay for—OOG FU WOO SHIT SUE! Speak English hoe! Take your damn juice. I wasn't stealing nothin' from you chink ass hoe!"

She grabbed me. Bitch! I hit that hoe upside her jaw. Who the fuck she think she is puttin' her hands on somebody. Fuck this hoe, I ain' gon' argue with this bitch. I turn my back. And walk away. I see the collard greens again only now they're growing like big trees then I see a red dirt road in the middle of the salad bar, no lie, like I'm high or something. Then everything is normal Korea town fruit stand again. Del Monte corn out a can poured in a stainless steel tub, iceberg, romaine, bran muffins and brownies wrapped in clear plastic. Fuck it I'm not thirsty no way.

I don't hear the blast till I'm dead
I don't feel nothin' either
as I split in half a dog yelps
and every sound I ever heard flies
out my mouth on green wings
and crimson waterfalls open in
my skull and my bones come
aloose.
The dog is screaming
like a siren now
and in the distance a bucket of
water spills over on a dusty red
dirt road and my heart quits
falls face first in
shattered glass on
a concrete floor.
The camera keeps rolling.
My left leg twitches.
I don't cry. Fifteen.
Green as greens passing from
sight under broken
bottles of light.

I don't remember what I did
wrong. Somebody hit you, you
hit 'em back. She didn't have to
shoot me. I was born here and
someone can shoot me and go
home and eat turkey on
Thanksgiving— what kinda shit
is that? Videotape the bitch
killing me, the hoe's own
videotape recording
the end of my days
reeling obscenely for
T.V. cameras—
my blood sweet Jesus! Rolling
20s Bounty Munters PJs Imperial
Courts NWA LAPD South
Central Hollywood 18th Street
Diamond Riders Easy Riders it's
a black thang it's a brown thang
Crips Bloods, Mexicans together
forever tonite. I don't remember...
I jus' wanted some juice and now
I'm dead. Killed by a
model minority success story.
Listen, is anybody gonna
say anything?
I was gonna get a new
orange leather jacket to match my
Reeboks.
I was passing math and doing
good in English.
Fuck history,
I'm tired of hearing
bout George Washington
and Columbus.
I told that cracker, "Shit, muther-
fucker what about us?" No, I
wasn't pregnant, but I was gonna
have a baby, definitely, one day. I
like Luther Vandross, Tone Loc
and Queen Latifha.
Listen, is anybody gonna say
anything?
Community service! A white
bitch with a pink slit between her
legs like mine, drips red. A white
girl that probably got into law
school on the affirmative action
birthed by black people's strug-
gle, sitting on a seat that was
opened up for her by Rosa Parks
and Fannie Lou Hamer, nig—no,
black people, African Americans,
like me, marching under fire,
hoses, broken glass gasolined
bodies testicles sliced off, strange
fruit, tossed to dogs. Swinging
from trees.
This white judge woman
hooded in mahogany
walled chambers
decides my life
is not worth nothing.
A fifteen year old black girl
equals zero in this white bitch's
book. She sentences this yellow
gunslinger to community service
and probation?
What are the terms
of her probation,
That she don't kill
nobody white?
Does anybody hear me?
Without my tongue.
Fifteen and out of time.
Listen to the gasoline
on the wind.
Listen to my blood rhyme
drip drop on the sidewalk.
Hear me children—
and BURN.

justice took a beating

An image started forming in my mind before the evening when the verdict came down. A woman's face, her left eye ringed in a puffy, fading purple. More bruises about her temple. Silent: her thoughts turned so deep inside she seemed to sleep. And more: a small child's chubby hand reaching towards the hurt, making light contact with it. Soft on soft. Tentative moves of the hand. The little girl closed her eyes, too, but with her baby smile, she sent her mother a healing wish.

I didn't know why these two had come to visit me or who they were. But the child asked me to write something. She asked me to consider what passed between mother and tender child reaching up, even in sleep, to comfort her. And the verdict came down, and Los Angeles exploded. It took a while to form, but here's what baby girl and her mama gave me:

White man, take your father's dick out your ass: You're killing me. Take your mother's hand off your cock: You're killing me. Clear the cigarette smoke out your lungs: I'm smothering. Piss the liquor out your veins: I'm puking. Bind your own wounds before I bleed away. Tie it up, all your shit. I struggle with it. I want to see you sweep the garbage off your streets that ends up on my plate. I want to hear you talk the truth about your fiery rage So I don't have to burn like hell. Stop calling for my calm while you bomb Iraqi babies. Stop asking me to be peaceful while you're slapping your woman. Take your hand off your daughter, you bastard, because I will defend myself. You got a long stun gun, don't you? You got a hard billy club. You got everything but a clear vision of yourself, 'cause you don't want to see what I see. You could implode and turn into a black hole in space, and we'd all get to see you for the hungry sucker you are. Why don't you just lie down and take a rest. You need it. Work so hard on killing our fish and trees. Work so hard on poisoning our rivers. Work so hard on selling us beer and fat and exploding our hearts. Why don't you just take a long, deserved vacation. Why don't you just get out of our faces. Why don't you get down on your knees and pray I don't pray 'cause I got a prayer for you. I got Mother Oya for you. I got the whirlwind and the fire for you. I got the dust of the graveyard for you. I got everything for you but an excuse for you. Let me get some of this for you. Let me help you to something you need. Let me help you get over yourself. And let me get on with myself. That's right: Take a breath. Maybe now I can breathe, too. That's right: Run home early. Riot's coming. Back off: It's less stressful for both of us And you know you can't manage your stress 'Cause your stress is your evil. We're sick of dying of it. So, here, take it back. Take it all. Take it all back where it came from. Take as much as you can stand. And when you've taken it, we can talk about talking. We can have a little talk. We can talk about what you're going to do about you instead of what you're going to do to me. It's quite a rhythm, blow for blow. The melody's hectic but the words will surely come to you.

—Eva Yaa Asantewaa

newark

my flight was at 8 am.

at 5 am we left the club. i fisted the driver a bill, twenty american dollars, telling him in english where we wanted to go, two stops, and not to look over his shoulder. we rolled slowly out of makati through some dark, intricate streets.

it happened naturally, easily really. we had been waiting for it so long it was as if we fell through the wall of our fear. the car was small. our movements were awkward. my lips found his, which tasted as i'd always thought lips like his would taste, though i'd never tasted lips like his before. my hands felt like hungry mouths feeding on his nipples. i wasn't conscious of the yellows or the reds or the neighbors looking in. i was feeling full of power.

we found our way to EDSA. the motor throttled as the cab took on the open road. various faces of decay swept past us, and i made love to him with a certain fury.

i thought about him and me, about the potholes and the heat, about a way to get him to new york, into some graduate school or something somewhere somehow. about how damn these filipinos are good, like i should know, i mean, i've only had one, or like i shouldn't know, i mean, i've only been one all my life.

lights made a rhythm on our skin, the engine got louder and the diesel wind became deafening. our voices got lost in it though we were hollering like children in a dream, or like children giving birth.

suddenly there was this silence. we were no longer on the freeway. we were on a quiet street rolling towards the subdivision. we scrambled to cover ourselves. i snagged skin in my zipper, my shorts felt sticky. all the windows were down, but there was no hope in heaven of losing that funk.

at the gate a flood trained on us. before the guards could get any closer, i told them i was staying with senator santos, could they let us in? they didn't need the flood really. the sun was coming up. a rooster crowed. they waved us past.

it was then i knew i knew more than i did before. this was not goodbye. i knew it somehow. and there on the knees of my new coco colony jeans shone the proof, the dark leaves of his fingers and the traces of an old love, newly found.

—angelo ragaza

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